THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Benjamin F. Glazer
Philada. Aug-1909.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/enamelscameosoth00gautiala

THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

IN TWENTY-FOUR VOLUMES

LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 915

COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY GEORGE D. SPROUL.

THE WORKS OF
THEOPHILE GAUTIER

VOLUME TWENTY-FOUR

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST
Department of French, Harvard University

THE PROCESSION OF THE SACRED BULL "APIS-OSIRIS"
A photogravure from a painting by F. A. Bridgman

ENAMELS AND
CAMEOS

AND OTHER POEMS

TRANSLATED BY AGNES LEE

By my granite shape of yore
Passed the priests, with stately pschent,
And the mystic boat upbore,
Emblemed and magnificent.

— Page 82.

THE JENSON SOCIETY
PRINTED FOR MEMBERS ONLY
MCMVI

THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

VOLUME TWENTY-FOUR

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST

Department of French, Harvard University

ENAMELS AND CAMEOS

AND OTHER POEMS

TRANSLATED BY AGNES LEE

THE JENSON SOCIETY

PRINTED FOR MEMBERS ONLY

MCMVI

Copyright, 1903, by
GEORGE D. SPROUL

UNIVERSITY PRESS · JOHN WILSON
AND SON · CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

College Library
PQ
2258
E53E
1903

Contents

INTRODUCTION . . . . . Page 3
THE GOD AND THE OPAL—TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER " 33

ENAMELS AND CAMEOS

PREFACE . . . . . " 37
AFFINITY—A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL . . . . " 38
THE POEM OF WOMAN—MARBLE OF PAROS . . " 42
A STUDY OF HANDS:
I IMPERIA . . . . . " 46
II LACENAIRE . . . . . " 49
VARIATIONS ON THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE:
I ON THE STREET . . . . . " 52
II ON THE LAGOONS . . . . . " 54
III CARNIVAL . . . . . " 56
IV MOONLIGHT . . . . . " 58
SYMPHONY IN WHITE MAJOR . . . . . " 60
COQUETRY IN DEATH . . . . . " 64
HEART'S DIAMOND . . . . . " 66
SPRING'S FIRST SMILE . . . . . " 68
CONTRALTO . . . . . " 70
EYES OF BLUE . . . . . " 74
THE TOREADOR'S SERENADE . . . . . " 77
NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS:
I THE OBELISK IN PARIS . . . . . " 80
II THE OBELISK IN LUXOR . . . . . " 84

1569267

CONTENTS

Veterans of the Old Guard, December 15	*Page*	88
Sea-Gloom	"	94
To a Rose-coloured Gown	"	97
The World 's Malicious	"	99
Ines de las Sierras — To Petra Camara	"	101
Odelet, after Anacreon	"	105
Smoke	"	106
Apollonia	"	107
The Blind Man	"	108
Song	"	110
Winter Fantasies	"	111
The Brook	"	116
Tombs and Funeral Pyres	"	118
Bjorn's Banquet	"	124
The Watch	"	130
The Mermaids	"	132
Two Love-Locks	"	135
The Tea-Rose	"	136
Carmen	"	138
What the Swallows Say — An Autumn Song	"	140
Christmas	"	144
The Dead Child's Playthings	"	145
After Writing my Dramatic Review	"	147
The Castle of Remembrance	"	149
Camellia and Meadow Daisy	"	160
The Fellah — A Water-Colour by Princess Mathilde	"	162
The Garret	"	163
The Cloud	"	166

CONTENTS

THE BLACKBIRD . . . . . *Page* 168
THE FLOWER THAT MAKES THE SPRINGTIME . . . " 170
A LAST WISH . . . . . " 173
THE DOVE . . . . . " 174
A PLEASANT EVENING . . . . . " 176
ART . . . . . " 180

SELECTED POEMS

THE MIDDLE AGES . . . . . " 185
THE CAPTIVE BIRD . . . . . " 187
ON A THOUGHT OF WORDSWORTH'S . . . . . " 189
CARYATIDES . . . . . " 190
THE CHIMERA . . . . . " 191
THE ENCOUNTER . . . . . " 192
VERSAILLES . . . . . " 193
BARCAROLLE . . . . . " 194
THE PORTAL . . . . . " 196
THE ESCORIAL . . . . . " 203
A KING'S SOLITUDE . . . . . " 204
THE LAUREL IN THE GENERALIFE GARDEN . . . " 206
FAREWELL TO POETRY . . . . . " 207
THE TULIP . . . . . " 208
TOUCH NOT THE MARBLE . . . . . " 209

ALBERTUS, OR THE SOUL AND SIN . " 215
THE COMEDY OF DEATH . . . . . " 283

List of Illustrations

The Procession of the Sacred Bull, "Apis-Osiris" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Scene in a Smyrna Coffee House . . . *Page* 142

Introduction

ENAMELS and CAMEOS and OTHER POEMS

Introduction

THE divine gift of verse having been denied to the translator and editor of this English edition of Théophile Gautier's works, he has secured the collaboration, for this part of his task, of Mrs. Agnes Lee, who has undertaken and carried it out with care and skill.

To translate any author satisfactorily, that is, in such a manner that his literary quality shall become apparent to the reader, is, in all conscience, a sufficiently difficult matter when prose alone is in question. But when to the obstacles to be overcome are added the peculiarly characteristic features of verse, the difficulty becomes wellnigh insurmountable.

In the case of French verse in general it may be possible occasionally to render, with fair approach to accuracy combined with retention of the poetic form, the meaning of the author, and with it the more strik-

ing features of the style. It never can be an easy task, or one that when accomplished satisfies fully the exacting demands of the cultured reader, more particularly of the translator, if the latter, as is at times the case, is endowed with a literary and artistic conscience. The very character of French verse presents in itself an obstacle that can but rarely be overcome. The total lack of accent, as generally understood, and the consequent dependence upon rime, increase the arduousness of the task.

Then, with all poetry, it is impossible to retain in a version, however skilful and loving, that flower, that essence, subtle, delicate, magical, which, like the down on butterfly's wing, vanishes the instant it is touched. It is impossible, or wellnigh so, to reproduce in one tongue the mysterious and deep harmony, the sweet, elusive melody of another. It is impossible to preserve that peculiar warmth of colour, that flushing of hue which charm in the original, and the loss of which, while it may not be noted by the reader unacquainted with the language in which the original is written, nevertheless so far disfigures the translation and makes it perforce unfaithful. With the best intentions in the world, with the liveliest desire to reproduce in

English the characteristics of the French, with the most thorough knowledge of the idioms and turns of the one and the other tongue, the artist who seeks to transpose from the one language into the other must fain confess that it is after all but a paraphrase — however excellent, however accurate — that has been produced.

More especially must this be true of Théophile Gautier's work in verse. An artist himself in the most precise sense of the word, he was a believer in and an apostle of form. Words were not mere aggregations of letters or syllables, having each and all a definite meaning attached to them and nothing more. They were not simply a means, when assembled, of communicating ideas. They had qualities and properties of their own — intimately, essentially their own — which gave them a value wholly apart from any usefulness they might possess as replacing the primitive language of signs. They were full of colour, they were colour; they were full of music, they were music's self; they were sculpture and they were architecture; they were metal, and they were stuffs of richest loom, — silk and satin, gauze and lawn, velvet and brocade; they were gems and stones of purest ray serene; they blazed with

internal fires; they were refulgent with inward glow; they burned with dull flame and shone with scintillation resplendent. No precious metal, no pearl of finest orient but was to be found among them. Every shade and hue of colour, every sound and note of music was given out by them. They had properties of their own that naught could destroy, and the poet's business it was to discover these, to turn them to use. Baudelaire, whose talent Gautier so thoroughly understood and so well described, said in his poem entitled "Correspondences": —

"Like long-drawn echoes that in the distance mingle in dark, abysmal harmony, vast as night's self and vast as the light, perfumes and colours and sounds correspond."

Gautier did not go so far; he was not a Symbolist, though he did believe in "correspondences," without the feeling for and gift of which, he maintained, no man could be a true poet. Words did possess a music of their own, in his belief, and he has many a time proved the fact in his own verse; they also possessed a colour of their own, and painter as he was he utilised this property over and over again; they had a sonorousness of their own, and like Hugo, he knew how to avail himself of it. But it cannot be said of him that

he used words in the way in which the Symbolists and Decadents used them; he did not force them to the same extent, and was content to bring out that which was plainly or subtly visible or audible in them to the artistic eye and ear. It was the sense of vision which he especially cultivated, never having forgotten his early training in that line when he studied painting. He beheld particularly the exterior world, and no one has surpassed him in his descriptions of it. Here again it it was his painter sense that stood him in such good stead. He had learned to look, and having seen to reproduce. His poems are full of admirable examples of vivid descriptions of scenery and landscape; of vast prospects and of "bits." He has what Brunetière called "intense impressions of art;" he paints in words to a degree and with a power and skill unsurpassed in any other works of the period. One has to come down to Leconte de Lisle, one of his own disciples, to meet with any word paintings equalling his in perfection and strength and vividness.

Now these very qualities make the translation of his poems into any other tongue an exceedingly difficult and arduous task. It is not possible, simply, to say in another language just what he says in his rich, ample,

varied French. It is not possible to reproduce the effects he sought and attained, for English is so different from Gautier's mother-tongue that not the greatest poet could render in it just the effects that he obtained, and obtained by most diligent labour and continual polishing and repolishing of the form in which he cast his thought.

"Form is everything," he says in an article on one of Hugo's dramas, "no matter what may have been prated on the subject." And to the cult of form he applied himself with singular diligence and perseverance, attaining effects so remarkable as to be the delight of the ear attuned to the melody and beauteousness of French verse. It is always beauty he is in search of, for he holds it superior to all else on earth — and possibly in heaven. He admires Baudelaire largely because that poet is a worshipper of the beautiful and succeeds in finding it even in the horrible and the repulsive. He holds that beauty is an end in itself, and he repels the proposition that every piece of literary or artistic work should have a practical or at least a moral purpose.

Poetry, to him, was not meant to be used as a vehicle for instruction in morals, in science, in aught

that was positive, utilitarian, workaday, commonplace. It was a divine tongue in which beauteous things were to be said; a tongue which the vulgar could not and need not understand, but which was comprehended of all in whom burned, however faintly, the sacred fire. He was at one with Alfred de Musset when the latter exclaimed: —

"It is verse I love above all — the language immortal. Perchance 't is blasphemy, so let me whisper it low: I love it to madness. It has this great advantage, that never were fools able to appreciate it; that it comes to us from God, — that it is limpid and beauteous; that the world hears it, but speaks it not."

He thoroughly endorsed every word in the following passage from Baudelaire, who looked upon him as his master: —

"If a man will only take the trouble to examine himself, . . . he will perceive that poetry can have no other end than itself; it cannot have any other, and no poem can be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of being called a poem, as that which has been written solely for the pleasure of writing a poem.

"I do not mean to imply that poetry does not ennoble manners, — I desire to be correctly understood, — or that its final result is not the elevation of man above sordid interests:

that would be plainly absurd. What I say is that if the poet has sought to attain a moral end, he has lessened his poetic force, and it is not imprudent to wager that his work will be poor. Poetry cannot assimilate itself to science or morals, under pain of death or forfeiture. Itself, not truth, is its end.

"The principle of poetry is strictly and simply human aspiration to a higher beauty, and the principle manifests itself in enthusiasm, in rapture of the soul, — an enthusiasm which is wholly independent of passion, the intoxication of the heart, and of truth, the food of reason. For passion is a *natural* thing, too natural indeed not to introduce an unpleasant, a discordant tone into the domain of pure beauty; too familiar and too violent not to scandalise the pure desires, the gracious melancholy, and the noble despair that inhabit the supernatural regions of poetry."

Poems of passion are not to be met with in Gautier's work. He has none that recall the cries of despair and ardour that burst forth from de Musset, the tender regrets and lamentations of Lamartine. He has written some love poems; he has indulged, as young Romanticists all did, in addresses to fair female forms, often as not purely ideal; he has talked love, but it has never swayed and tossed him about on the ocean of passion. For him no Graziella, no Elvira, no Julia appears to have existed; in his heart there was little

room for aught else than the worship of beauty under its various forms; women appealed to him in so far as they were partial incarnations of that divine principle, but they do not appear to have affected him as much as the beauty of statues or paintings, the glory of landscapes, or the majesty of architecture. Music moved him, but the artist herself was of secondary importance. Dancing delighted him, but the dancer was subordinate to the performance itself.

So he never sang woman as woman; he has written that incomparable poem: "The Poem of Woman," but he makes clear his inmost thought in the sub-title: "Marble of Paros." He preferred, we know, the statue to the living form; the statue was more perfect, approached more nearly to the ideal of beauty, it was more idealised, and therefore, in his view, truer to the fact. This he dwells on in his account of Baudelaire: —

"Baudelaire . . . believed art should be absolutely autonomous, and refused to admit that poetry had any end other than itself, or any mission to fulfil other than that of exciting in the reader's mind the sensation of the Beautiful, in the strictest meaning of the word. . . . He banished from poetry, to the utmost of his power, eloquence, passion, and the too accurate representation of truth. Just as one must not use in

sculpture parts cast directly from the living model, so he insisted that before being admitted into the sphere of art every object should undergo a metamorphosis that should fit it for that subtle realm, by idealising it and removing it from trivial truth."

That is his own creed, put into practice by an admirer and a follower. It is the cult of Art for Art's own sake, without utilitarian or moral motive. It is the worship of pure beauty, and it is the thought that inspired Leconte de Lisle, the impeccable poet, equally with Gautier, when he sang the wondrous song of "Hypatia": —

"Sleep, O fair victim, within our souls' closed depths,
Wrapped in thy virgin shroud and with lotus crowned.
Sleep! For hideous ugliness of the world is queen,
And no longer we know the road that to Paros leads.

"The gods are turned to dust; the earth is mute;
No sound from thy deserted heav'n shall e'er be heard.
Sleep! But, living within him, sing to the poet's heart
Of sacred Beauty the melodious hymn.

"For it alone survives, unchanged, eternal.
Scattered by Death the quaking worlds may be —
But forth doth Beauty flame, and all in her revives;
Under her white feet still the worlds revolve."

This conception, this purpose Gautier faithfully adhered to throughout his career, and in face of the reproach,

addressed to him even during his lifetime, that he lost sight of great moral notions. He disclaimed being a moralist, a student of manners, an inquirer into the possibilities of elevating the human race by spreading the principles of philosophy, total abstinence, religion, or anything akin thereto, and desired simply to be an artist, to sing melodiously of beauty, and to reproduce it as fully as he might in all his works.

Poetry was a thing apart; the gift of writing verse was not merely, in his opinion, the power of expressing admirably and feelingly, of imparting the sense of colour and melody, of communicating rhythm and number to the phrase, or, on the other hand, the mere power of riming, a gift possessed, as he has truly remarked, by very mediocre people. It is not enough to align words, to make the final letters of each line repeat a given sound. There is more than this in real poetry, and it was real poetry alone that he cared for or wrote. It involved, not necessarily ideas — commonplace or original — but the bringing out of the subject the fullest measure of perfection of form of which it was susceptible. Form is indispensable, in his theory of poetry. It is the very touchstone of merit; the very test of existence. The careful working out

of the form, at least the producing of perfect form with or without labour, alone marked out the man as a poet. Without form he was only a poetaster; with it, a true singer.

This view gives, apparently, over-importance to verse. Whether it do so or not, it is unquestionably the view held by Gautier. "It is the commonest thing in the world, at the present time," he says, "to assume that what is poetical is poetry. The two have nothing in common. Fénelon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, George Sand are poetical, but they are not poets; that is to say, they are incapable of writing verse, even mediocre verse, a special gift possessed by people greatly inferior in merit to these illustrious masters. To attempt to separate verse from poetry is a modern piece of folly that tends to nothing less than the destruction of art itself."

It is curious that Gautier, once the contemner of Boileau, had become, by the time he penned these words, almost a champion of the critic's or at least a defender and advocate of one of the principles upon which Boileau laid most stress: the absolute necessity of improving the form until perfection has been attained. Not every kind of verse satisfied his exacting taste;

it had to be the very best, wrought out with infinite care, for it is not given to every one to produce superb, perfect lines without an effort, as was the case with Victor Hugo, who uttered them as naturally and as easily as he breathed. Gautier held to the need of improving the work, and the first cast of the form was not necessarily the best. So the poet must work over his verse until he attained perfection. This meant verse of a higher quality than the average verse of Lamartine and Alfred de Musset, neither of whom troubled much about the minutiæ upon which Gautier lays stress. "When a poet is in question," he says again, "the manner in which his verse is wrought is a matter of considerable importance and worth studying, for it constitutes in great part the intrinsic value of his verse. It is the stamp with which he mints his gold, his silver or copper." That amounts to saying that, while the value of the poem, outside its form, must necessarily vary with the variation in the talent, genius, and inspiration of the writer, in no case can the writer dispense with seeking excellence of form, which is to constitute a great part of the worth of his work. "No doubt," he continues, "these minutiæ will seem very frivolous to utilitarians, progressive and

practical, or simply clever men, who think with Stendhal, that verse is a childish form that was good enough for the primitive ages, but who insist that poetry should be written in prose, as beseems an age of common-sense. Yet it is precisely these minutiæ that cause verse to be good or bad, and that distinguish the true poet from the sham."

The instrument of verse, words, with their infinite capabilities, was therefore a matter of importance to him, and on the study of words and the resources they offer to the poet he bestowed infinite time and thought. Gifted with a vivid sense of colour, with an intense sense of form, with a delicate appreciation of sound, he naturally enough sought to turn to account every word that could be made to yield an effect in any one of these ways. It was herein he differed from Boileau, to whom the separation of the nobler from the more common words was a matter of moment. To Gautier all words were good, if only they rendered his thought. He wished to attain accuracy in expression; to produce just the effect he sought, and not another, or one merely analogous to it. Hence his vocabulary was enriched with many terms drawn from the most varied sources. There are numberless examples of

this in "Enamels and Cameos," though the reader unacquainted with the correct, restrained, stilted mode of speech of the pseudo-classicists may not notice them. And indeed in English these words would not attract attention.

In one of his conversations, reported by Émile Bergerat, — "Théophile Gautier: Entretiens, Souvenirs et Correspondance," — Gautier discussed the nature and value of his work in enriching the language of French poetry, and claimed the "modest praise of being a philologist." He believed he had fashioned, for the poets who were coming after him, a remarkable instrument capable of rendering every shade of feeling, every gradation of hue and colour, every sound of music and melody. He dilated on the importance, on the necessity which exists for thought to be possessed of a garment of words suited to itself: —

"So soon as it finds in words a garment fitted to it, it straightway goes along easily; and if the words be elegant of cut and rich in colour, it grows bolder and triumphant, for when beauteous and fitly attired, it feels that it is more welcome and is received into better society. Then if so be a poet fastens to its feet the two sonorous wings of rime, it takes its flight and soars on high."

This view recalls that set forth by Victor Hugo in the interesting and highly personal poem entitled "Reply to an Indictment," in which he relates the part he played in the linguistic revolution: —

"Then, a brigand I, — I came; I shouted: Why should these ever go before and those behind ever be? Then, upon the Academy, the old beldame, spreading her skirts to shelter the terrified tropes, and upon the battalions of alexandrines in squares, I blew a blast of revolt. The old dictionary I crowned with Liberty's red cap. . . . I stormed and demolished the Bastile of rimes. I did more: I smashed every iron fetter that bound the common words, and I drew forth from hell the old ones, long damned, legions of the nether depths. I pulled down the spirals of periphrases, and mingled, confounded, laid flat under heaven's vault, the alphabet, that sombre tower which uprose out of Babel; for well I knew that the wrathful hand that sets the words free, to thought restores its liberty."

Gautier had this in mind when he said further, in that same conversation: "My share in that literary revolution was plainly indicated. I was the painter of the company. I hurried forth to conquer adjectives; I dug up lovely, even admirable ones, that henceforth man cannot do without. I foraged on all hands in the sixteenth century, to the horror of the subscribers to

the Théâtre-Français, of members of the French Academy, of Touquet-snuff-boxes and wan-faced bourgeois, as Petrus hath it. I returned with my basket full, with sheaves and splendours. I put upon the palette of style every hue of dawn and every tint of sunset; I have given you back red, dishonoured by political wire-pullers; I have written poems in white major, and when I saw that the result was good, that the writers of my kith and kin were hastening after me and that the professors were yowling in their chairs, I formulated my famous axiom: 'He whom a thought, even the most complex, a vision, were it the most apocalyptical, surprises unprovided with words to render it, is not a writer.' And the goats were separated from the sheep, and the minions of Scribe from the disciples of Hugo, in whom all genius resides. Such was my part in the conquest."

Never was Gautier surprised without a word. Never did he lack just the right expression to produce the effect he sought, whether of colour, of sound, or of form. Two poems, among others, in this volume, may be cited as examples of his marvellous command of language, his keen discernment of the exact value of each word, and his intensity of vision.

They are the "Symphony in White Major" and "The Obelisk in Luxor." These may also serve as instances of the absolute impossibility of rendering into any other language the exquisite impression made by the originals and the perfection of form which marks them. The exigencies of English verse are not compatible with the beauties of the French, and the utmost artistic effort must fail to reproduce exactly the infinitely strong yet delicate fashioning of the stanzas, the wondrous variety of whiteness in the one, the glow of intensest colour and light in the other. The rhythm is perfect, so also the rime, and the music of each poem is marvellous. Take these stanzas from "The Obelisk in Luxor": —

"Je veille, unique sentinelle
De ce grand palais dévasté,
Dans la solitude éternelle,
En face de l'immensité.

"A l'horizon que rien ne borne,
Stérile, muet, infini,
Le désert sous le soleil morne,
Déroule son linceul jauni.

"Au-dessus de la terre nue,
Le ciel, autre désert d'azur,
Où jamais ne flotte une nue,
S'étale implacablement pur.

"Le Nil, dont l'eau morte s'étame
D'une pellicule de plomb,
Luit, ridé par l'hippopotame,
Sous un jour mat tombant d'aplomb;

"Et les crocodiles rapaces,
Sur le sable en feu des îlots,
Demi-cuits dans leurs carapaces,
Se pâment avec des sanglots.

"Immobile sur son pied grêle,
L'ibis, le bec dans son jabot,
Déchiffre au bout de quelque stèle
Le cartouche sacré de Thot."

How is it possible to reproduce by a translation into any other European tongue just the effect attained here? Undoubtedly the meaning, the general idea, the impression of tremendous loneliness and suffocating heat may be, is conveyed, but the form escapes the most skilful treatment and vanishes as the morning mist before the hot sun of summer.

It is plain that the effort to translate a poet into another tongue than his own is to court defeat at the outset, yet it was impossible to present an edition of Gautier to the public without including in it some part, at least, of his verse.

One advantage the translation possesses: it proves

that Gautier was not so wholly devoid of ideas as hostile critics, mayhap deaf to the singular charm of his verse, have maintained. The poems in their English dress interest; Gautier has delightful comparisons, novel views of things, unexpected contrasts, and these are not lost. Further, it is interesting to note how subjects that would never strike the average mind as susceptible of being turned into a vehicle for beautiful verse are after all susceptible of poetic treatment if only a thorough artist takes hold of them. "The Watch," "Love Locks," "After Writing my Dramatic Review," and "A Pleasant Evening," do not appear to be poetical subjects, yet, in French at least, there is an undeniable charm about every one of these poems, and each is a splendid instance of difficulties surmounted, apparently, with the greatest ease.

Gautier's production in verse is comparatively limited. His "Farewell to Poetry" gives us the reason. The incessant demands of the newspaper upon his time and talent, the need of turning out a daily supply of copy that increased instead of lessening, left him no leisure for the worship of the Muse. Ere he entered upon his career as a journalist, he had written more than one graceful and even striking poem. These earlier pro-

ductions were necessarily in the purest Romanticist taste, and the characteristics of that school are markedly evident in this part of his work. Yet, already the great artist that he was manifested himself, and there are numerous passages of infinite beauty, wrought out with utmost care. The subjects are drawn from the plethoric storehouse of the new school — landscapes, reminiscences of the beloved Middle Ages, so much in fashion just then, dreams and reveries, sentimental recollections, sunsets and picturesque effects, shudders and orgies, ghastly contemplations of skeletons and death's-heads, pæans in honour of comrades or masters, — in a word, all the stock in trade with which any reader of the literature of that period is familiar.

The Preface is interesting, and deserves to be transcribed in part, for already, in 1832, he holds to the theory of Art for Art's sake, and maintains the usefulness of Beauty : —

" To the utilitarians, utopists, economists, Saint-Simonists and others who may ask him what is the use of it all, he will answer : What is the use of it ? It is beautiful. Is not that sufficient ? It is beautiful, like flowers, and scents, and birds ; like everything man has been unable to divert to his own use and to deprave.

"As a general rule, the moment a thing becomes useful, it ceases to be beautiful. It becomes merged in positive life; it turns to prose from poetry; having been free, it becomes a slave, — that is art, all art really. Art is liberty, luxury, efflorescence; it is the blossoming out of the soul in idleness. Painting, sculpture, and music subserve no useful purpose whatever. Gems carefully cut, unique trifles, uncommon ornaments are mere superfluities. Yet who would deliberately do without them? Happiness does not consist in the possession of the indispensable; enjoyment does not mean not suffering, and the things one least needs are those that charm one most. There are and there always will be artistic souls to whom the paintings of Ingres and Delacroix, and the water-colours of Boulanger and Decamps will appear more useful than railways and steamships."

He described the contents himself, and in so picturesque, so attractive a manner that the reader of the present day is fain to read every one of the poems thus announced:

"There are, to begin with, little home scenes, sweet and peaceful effects, small landscapes after the manner of the Flemish, quiet in touch, somewhat subdued in tone, without mighty mountains, boundless horizons, torrents, or cataracts. Level plains, with cobalt blue distances; lowly hills up which winds a path; the smoke from a cot; a brook babbling under the water-lilies; a bush covered with red berries; an ox-eye

daisy quivering dew-laden; a passing cloud casting a wave of shadow over the wheat; a stork settling on roof of Gothic donjon. That is all; then, by way of imparting life to the scene, a frog leaping through the reeds, a dragon-fly disporting itself in a sunbeam, a lizard toasting itself in the sunshine, a lark upspringing from the furrow, a thrush singing in the hedgerow, a bee buzzing and garnering, — the remembrances of six months spent in a lovely country district. Here and there, as it were a dawning of budding youth, a longing, a tear, a few words of love, a chaste sketch of a girl's profile; a purely childlike poetry, plump and dimpled, on which the muscles do not as yet show."

The poems themselves are already very well written verse, with the feeling for colour, picturesqueness, sonority, which is to become characteristic of Théophile Gautier. The opening piece, "Meditation," is full of youthful freshness and of the sentiment, still immature, of the brief life of all things on earth. "The Middle Ages" reveals the strong hold which that period had taken upon the imagination of the writer and his contemporaries. "A Landscape" is marked by the qualities of vividness and accurate description which are to be still more evident in the Spanish poems. In "Wishes," the sensation of colour is almost overpowering, and Hugo himself had not

then anything more brilliant and powerful in this line. "The Nightmare" is interesting as an example of the literature of putridity which had adepts and admirers, but which did not long detain the poet, who has made great fun of it in his "Daniel Jovard," in which he used by way of epigraph, the last four lines of this composition. "Sunset" may well have inspired Zola's superb descriptions of the sunsets in Paris, in "l'Œuvre;" and "The View," together with other poems in the same order, is an admirable bit of descriptive poetry well worthy of the writer who was to depict so truly and strikingly scenes in many lands. "Debauch" is peculiar, but very Romanticist. It should be taken in conjunction with the tale entitled "The Bowl of Punch," of which it is a sort of justification, while the last lines expressly declare Gautier's reasons for what may shock many people: —

"It is poetry at least, a palette on which glow innumerable different hues; something clear, unmistakable; something in itself complete. It is colour, song, and verse!"

In later years, in the fulness of his talent and in the deliberate proclamation of his views and beliefs, he will repeat: "I am quite ready at times to have what is

rare at the cost of its being shocking, fantastic, and exaggerated."

The most important of his earlier poetical works is the "semi-diabolical, semi-fashionable legend" entitled "Albertus, or The Soul and Sin; a Theological Legend," written in 1831 and published the following year. It is a strange, weird, and at the close, repulsive story, purely imaginative, and in the same line of thought as the famous "Vampire," which has appeared in this edition. An old hag, a sorceress, a compounder of philters and poisons, a caster of spells, a servant of the devil, Veronica by name, dwells within a wood-covered, ruinous hut, in the neighbourhood of a town admirably painted in verse by Gautier. The description of the beldame's den is superb. Within this den she rubs herself all over, at the witching hour of midnight, with an unguent that removes wrinkles and every mark of senility, and restores to her the bloom and loveliness of youth. Thus transformed, she repairs to Leyden, and there leads the life of the splendid courtesans of the Renaissance, which Gautier always delighted in portraying and referring to. She falls in love with a genuinely Romanticist hero, Albertus, whose portrait is thus limned for the reader: —

"Foreign suns had shone upon his brow and gilded with a layer of sunburn his naturally pale Italian skin. His hair, rumpled by his fingers, fell on either side a forehead which Gall would have ecstatically felt for six months, and on which he would have written no less than a dozen treatises. It was an imperial brow, an artist's, a poet's, and of itself made up half the head ; 't was broad and ample, borne down by inspiration, which, in every wrinkle furrowed not by age, conceals some superhuman hope, some mighty thought, and it plainly bore these words inscribed upon it : Force and Conviction. The rest of the features corresponded with this grand brow. Yet was there somewhat unpleasant about them, and though faultless, one could have wished them different. Irony and sarcasm rather than genius gleamed from them, and the lower part of the face seemed to mock the upper. This combination produced the strangest effect ; one would have said a demon writhing under an angel's tread ; hell beneath the heavens. Although he had fine eyes, long dark eyebrows growing finer towards the temples, over the skin gliding as crawls a snake, a fringe of quivering silky lashes, the lion-like glance, the fiery flash that shot forth at times from the depths of those orbs, made one involuntarily shudder and turn pale. The boldest would have looked down when meeting the petrifying Medusa glance he sought to make gentle. Over his stern lip, shadowed at each end with a small mustache daintily waxed, a mocking smile at times flitted ; but his customary expression was one of deep disdain."

It is with this darksome dandy that Veronica falls desperately in love, and though at first he proves recalcitrant, she manages to attract him to her house. He yields to her desires, but as midnight strikes, the glorious beauty resumes her hag shape and carries him off on a broomstick to the witches' sabbath, where the most monstrous diversions are indulged in under the presidency of Satan in person. The Devil sneezes. "God bless you," unconsciously utters Albertus. And straightway devil, witches, demons, sorcerers vanish into thin air, and on the Appian Way peasants repairing to Rome in the early morn find the dead body of a man, his back broken, his neck twisted. It is all that is left of Albertus, and the poem ends with a mocking reference to the morality which is not clearly discernible. But the poet has had his fun at the reader's expense; he has startled and possibly shocked him — he has certainly tried to do so — he has introduced exquisite descriptions, he has indulged in witty moralising that recalls Musset's in "Namouna," he has written much beautiful verse — and he is satisfied. If the reader is not — no matter. The object of poetry is not to satisfy the wan-faced, smooth-shaven bourgeois, the stupid Philistine.

"The Comedy of Death" appeared in 1838, but parts of it had been composed as early as 1831. There was prefixed to it the piece entitled "The Portal," and the poem itself is divided into two parts, "Life in Death," and "Death in Life." The poet has wandered into a graveyard on All Saints' Day, and hears a conversation between a dead woman and the worm that has started to devour her flesh. Returning home, Raphael Sanzio appears to him, and bewails the disappearance of art from the world. Gautier then proceeds into the depths, and Faust tells him that science ends in nothingness, and that naught is worth having on earth save love. There then appears Don Juan, who has known all the joys that love and voluptuousness can bestow upon man, and his conclusion is that love is deadly, and that man should rather seek knowledge if he desires to enjoy real life. Thus the poet is left in uncertainty.

Here again are fine passages, and admirable examples of Gautier's powers as a writer of verse. The subject itself is not new, nor is the mode of treatment particularly striking. The main preoccupation of the author is already to turn out beautiful lines, and in this he succeeds.

The Spanish poems contain many superb pieces, and here one may revel in the perfection of the descriptions, in the glow and splendour of colour, in the sharpness and accuracy of line and contour, in the faithful and intense reproduction of effects. They are followed by a number of poems written at different intervals and bearing upon a variety of subjects; every one of them a model of prosody. And finally come the "Enamels and Cameos."

This is the typical collection of Gautier's verse. It first appeared in 1852, and subsequently passed through several editions. It is the author's most characteristic work; that on which he has bestowed most pains, fashioning each poem with infinite care, until he had wrought out a perfect form. In his account of the "Progress of French Poetry since 1830," he thus states the end he sought to attain: —

"The title, 'Enamels and Cameos,' indicates my intention to treat slight subjects within a restricted space, sometimes with the brilliant colours of enamel upon a plate of gold or copper, sometimes by using the cutter's wheel upon gems such as agate, cornelian, or onyx. Every poem was to be a medallion fit to be set in the cover of a casket, or a seal to be worn on the finger — something recalling the copies of antique medals one

sees in the studios of painters or sculptors. But I did not intend to deny myself the pleasure of carving on the whitish or reddish layers of the gems a clean modern profile, or of dressing the hair of Parisian Greek women seen at a recent ball after the fashions of Syracusan medals. The Alexandrine verse being too mighty for such modest ambition, I re-used the octosyllabic verse only, which I made over, polished and chiselled with all possible care. This form, by no means a new one, but renewed by the rhythm, the richness of the rimes, and the accuracy to which any workman may attain when he patiently and leisurely works out some small task, was rather well received, and octosyllabic verse in quatrains became for a time a favourite subject for practice by young poets."

It has been found impossible to preserve in the translation the form itself, for the reasons enunciated in another part of this introduction. Nor was it possible to reproduce the delicacy of the work in French so that the reader might judge for himself of the merit of Gautier as an artist. Mrs. Lee, indeed, considers her work simply a free translation, and it is in this light that it should be judged.

F. C. DE SUMICHRAST.

THE GOD AND THE OPAL

TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Gray caught he from the cloud, and green from earth,
And from a human breast the fire he drew,
And life and death were blended in one dew.
A sunbeam golden with the morning's mirth,
A wan, salt phantom from the sea, a girth
Of silver from the moon, shot colour through
The soul invisible, until it grew
To fulness, and the Opal Song had birth.

And then the god became the artisan.
With rarest skill he made his gem to glow,
Carving and shaping it to beauty such
That down the cycles it shall gleam to man,
And evermore man's wonderment shall know
The perfect finish, the immortal touch.

Agnes Lee.

Enamels and Cameos

and Other Poems

ENAMELS and CAMEOS and OTHER POEMS

PREFACE

When empires lay riven apart,
  Fared Goethe at battle time's thunder
To fragrant oases of art,
  To weave his *Divan* into wonder.

Leaving Shakespeare, he pondered the note
  Of Nisami, and heard in his leisure
The hoopoe's weird monody float,
  And set it to soft Orient measure.

As Goethe at Weimar delayed
  And dreamed in the fair garden closes,
And, questing in sun or in shade,
  With Hafiz plucked redolent roses, —

I, closed from the tempest that shook
  My window with fury impassioned,
Sat dreaming, and, safe in my nook,
  Enamels and Cameos fashioned.

AFFINITY

A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL

On an ancient temple gleaming,
Two great blocks of marble high
Thrice a thousand years lay dreaming
Dreams against an Attic sky.

Set within one silver whiteness,
Two wave-tears for Venus shed,
Two fair pearls of orient brightness,
Through the waste of water sped.

In the Generalife's fresh closes,
By a Moorish light illumed,
Two delicious, tender roses
By a fountain met and bloomed.

In the balm of May's bright weather,
Where the domes of Venice rise,
Lighted on Love's nest together
Two pale doves from azure skies.

AFFINITY

All things vanish into wonder,
Marble, pearl, dove, rose on tree,
Pearl shall melt and marble sunder,
Flower shall fade and bird shall flee!

Not a smallest part but lowly
Through the crucible must pass,
Where all shapes are molten slowly
In the universal mass.

Then as gradual Time discloses
Marbles melt to whitest skin,
Roses red to lips of roses,
And anew the lives begin.

And again the doves are plighted
In the hearts of lovers, while
Ocean pearls are reunited,
Set within a coral smile.

Thus affinity comes welling;
By its beauty everywhere
Soul a sister-soul foretelling,
All awakened and aware.

Quickened by a zephyr sunny,
Or a perfume, subtlewise,
As the bee unto the honey,
Atom unto atom flies.

And remembered are the hours
In the temple, down the blue,
And the talks amid the flowers,
Near the fount of crystal dew,

Kisses warm, and on the royal
Golden domes the wings that beat;
For the atoms all are loyal,
And again must love and greet.

Love forgotten wakes imperious,
For the past is never dead,
And the rose with joy delirious
Breathes again from lips of red.

Marble on the flesh of maiden
Feels its own white bloom, and faint
Knows the dove a murmur laden
With the echo of its plaint,

AFFINITY

Till resistance giveth over,
And the barriers fall undone,
And the stranger is the lover,
And affinity hath won!

You before whose face I tremble,
Say — what past we know not of
Called our fates to reassemble, —
Pearl or marble, rose or dove?

THE POEM OF WOMAN

MARBLE OF PAROS

Unto the dreamer once whose heart she had,
As she was showing forth her treasures rare,
Minded she was to read a poem fair,
The poem of her form with beauty glad.

First stately and superb she swept before
His gazing eyes, with high, Infanta mien,
Trailing behind her all the splendid sheen
Of nacarat floods of velvet that she wore.

Thus at the opera had he watched her bend
From out her box, her body one bright flame,
When all the air was ringing with her name,
And every song made her fair praise ascend.

Then had her art another way, for look!
The weighty velvet dropped, and in its place
A pale and cloudy fabric proved the grace
Of every line her glowing body took;

Till softly from her shoulder marble-sweet
The veil diaphanous fell, the folds whereof
Came fluttering downward like a snowy dove,
To nestle in the wonder of her feet.

She posed as for Apelles pridefully,
A lovely flesh and marble womanhood: —
Anadyomene, she upright stood
Naked upon the margent of the sea.

Fairer than any foam-drops crystalline,
Great pearls of Venice lay upon her breast,
Jewels of milky wonder lightly pressed
Upon the cool, fresh satin of her skin.

Exhaustless as the waves that kiss the brim,
Under the gleaming moon of many moods,
Were all the strophes of her attitudes.
What fascination sang her beauty's hymn!

But soon, grown weary of an art antique,
Of Phidias and of Venus, lo! again
Within another new and plastic strain
She grouped her charms unveilèd and unique.

Upon a cashmere opulently spread,
Sultana of Seraglio then she lay,
Laughing unto her little mirror gay,
That laughed again with lips of coral red;

The indolent, soft Georgian, posturing
With her long, supple narghilè at lip,
Showing the glorious fashion of her hip,
One foot upon the other languishing.

And, like to Ingres' Odalisque, supine,
Defying prurient modesty turned she,
Displaying in her beauty candidly
Wonder of curve and purity of line.

But hence, thou idle Odalisque! for life
Hath now its own fair picture to display —
The diamond in its rare effulgent ray, —
Beauty in Love hath reached its blossom rife.

She sways her body, bendeth back her head.
Her breathing comes more subtle and more fast.
Rocked in her dream's alluring arms, at last
Down hath she fallen upon her costly bed.

Her eyelids beat like fluttering pinions lit
  Upon the darkened silver of her eyes.
  Her bright, voluptuous glances upward rise
Into the vague and nacreous infinite.

Deck her with sweet, lush violets, instead
  Of death-flowers with their every pearl a tear;
  Scatter their purple clusters on her bier,
Who of her being's ecstasy lies dead.

And bear her very gently to her tomb —
  Her bed of white. There let the poet stay,
  Long hours upon his bended knees to pray,
When night shall close around the funeral room.

A STUDY OF HANDS

I

IMPERIA

A SCULPTOR showed to me one day
A hand, a Cleopatra's lure,
Or an Aspasia's, cast in clay,
Of masterwork a fragment pure.

Seized in a snowy kiss, and fair
As lily in the argent rise
Of dawn, like whitest poem there
Its beauty lay before mine eyes,

Bright in its pallor lustreless,
Reposing on a velvet bed,
Its fingers, weighted with their dress
Of jewels, delicately spread.

A little parted lay the thumb,
Showing the undulating line,
Beautiful, graceful, subtlesome,
Of its proud contour Florentine.

Strange hand! I wonder if it toyed
In silken locks of Don Juan,
Or on a gem-bright caftan joyed
To stroke the beard of some soldan;

Whether, as courtesan or queen,
Within its fingers fair and slight
Was pleasure's gilded sceptre seen,
Or sceptre of a royal might!

But sweet and firm it must have lain
Full oft its touch of power rare
Upon the curling lion-mane
Of some chimera caught in air.

Imperial, idle fantasy,
And love of soft, luxurious things,
Frenzies of passion, wondrous, free,
Impossible dream-flutterings!

Romances wild, and poesy
Of hasheech and of wine, vain speeds
Beneath Bohemia's brilliant sky
On unrestrained and maddened steeds!

All these were in the lines of it,
Of that white book with magic scrolled,
Where ciphers stood, by Venus writ,
That Love had trembled to behold.

II

LACENAIRE

Strange contrast was the severed hand
  Of Lacenaire, the murderer dead,
Soaked in a powerful essence, and
  Near by upon a cushion spread.

Letting a morbid fancy win,
  I touched, despite my loathing sane,
The cold, hair-covered, slimy skin,
  Not yet washed clean of deathly stain.

Yellow, uncanny, mummified,
  Like to a Pharaoh's hand it lay,
And stretched its faun-shaped fingers wide,
  Crisp with temptation's awful play;

As though an itch for flesh and gold
  Lured them to horrors yet to be,
Twisting them roughly as of old,
  Teasing their immobility.

There every vice and passion's whim
Had seamed the flesh abundantly
With hideous hieroglyphs and grim,
That headsmen read with fluency.

There plainly writ in furrows fell,
I saw the deeds of sin and soil,
Scorchings from every fiery hell
Wherein corruptions seethe and boil.

There was a track of Capri's vice,
Of lupanars and gaming-scores,
Fretted with wine and blood and dice,
Like ennui of old emperors.

Supple and fierce, it had some dower
Of grace unto the searching eye,
Some brutal fascination's power,
A gladiator's mastery.

Cold aristocracy of crime!
No plane inured, no hammer spent
The hand whose task for every time
Had but the knife for implement.

The hand of Lacenaire! No clue
Therein to labour's honest pride!
False poet, and assassin true,
The Manfred of the gutter died!

VARIATIONS ON THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

I

ON THE STREET

THERE is a popular old air
That every fiddler loves to scrape.
'T is wrung from organs everywhere,
To barking dog with wrath agape.

The music-box has registered
Its phrases garbled and reviled.
'T is classic to the household bird;
Grandmother learned it as a child.

The trumpet and the clarinet,
In dusty gardens of the dance,
Blow it to clerk and gay grisette,
In shrill, unlovely resonance.

And of a Sunday swarm the folk
Under the honeysuckle vine,
Quaffing, the while they talk and smoke,
The sun, the melody, the wine.

It lurks within the wry bassoon
The blind man plays, the porch beneath.
His poodle whimpers low the tune,
And holds the cup between its teeth.

The players of the light guitar,
Decked with their flimsy tartans, pale,
With voices sad, where feasters are,
Through coffee-houses fling its wail.

Great Paganini at a sign,
One night, as with a needle's gleam,
Picked up with end of bow divine
The little antiquated theme,

And, threading it with fingers deft,
He broidered it with colours bright,
Till up and down the faded weft
Ran golden arabesques of light.

II

ON THE LAGOONS

Tra la, tra la, la, la, la, — who
  Knows not the theme's soft spell?
Or sad or light or mock or true,
  Our mothers loved it well.

The Carnival of Venice! Long
  Adown canals it came,
Till, wafted on a zephyr's song,
  The ballet kept its fame.

I seem, whene'er its phrase I hear,
  A gondola to view,
With prow voluted, black and clear,
  Slip o'er the water blue;

To see, her bosom covered o'er
  With pearls, her body suave,
The Adriatic Venus soar
  On sound's chromatic wave.

The domes that on the water dwell
  Pursue the melody
In clear-drawn cadences, and swell
  Like breasts of love that sigh.

My chains around a pillar cast,
  I land before a fair
And rosy-pale façade at last,
  Upon a marble stair.

Oh! all dear Venice with her towers,
  Her boats, her masquers boon,
Her sweet chagrins, her mad, gay hours,
  Throbs in that ancient tune.

The tenuous, vibrant chords that smite,
  Rebuild in subtle way
The city joyous, free and light
  Of Canaletto's day!

III

CARNIVAL

Venice robes her for the ball;
Decked with spangles bright,
Multi-coloured Carnival
Teems with laughter light.

Harlequin with negro mask,
Tights of serpent hue,
Beateth with a note fantasque
His Cassander true.

Flapping loose his long, white sleeve,
Like a penguin spread,
Through a subtle semibreve
Pierrot thrusts his head.

Sleek Bologna's doctor goes
Maundering on a bass.
Punchinello finds for nose
Quaver on his face.

Hurtling Trivellino fine,
On a trill intent,
Scaramouch to Columbine
Gives the fan she lent.

Gliding to the tune, I mark
One veiled figure rise,
While through satin lashes dark
Luring gleam her eyes.

Tender little edge of lace,
Heaving with her breath!
"Under is her own dear face!"
An arpeggio saith.

And beneath the mask I know
Bloom of rosy lips,
And the patch on chin of snow,
As she by me trips!

IV

MOONLIGHT

Amid the chatter gay and mad
Saint Mark to Lido wafts, a tune
Like as a rocket riseth glad
As fountain riseth to the moon.

But in that air with laughter stirred,
That shakes its bells far out to sea,
Regret, a little stifled bird,
Mingles its frail sob audibly.

And in a mist of memory clad,
Like dream well-nigh effaced, I view
The sweet Belovèd, fair and sad,
Of dear, long-vanished days I knew.

Ah, pale she is! My soul in tears
An April day remembers yet: —
We sought the violets by the meres,
And in the grass our fingers met. . .

The vibrant note of violin
  Is the child voice that struck my heart,
Exquisite, plaintive, argentine,
  With all the anguish of its dart.

So sweetly, falsely, doth it steal,
  So cruel, yet so tender, too,
So cold, so burning, that I feel
  A deadly pleasure pierce me through;

Until my heart, an archway deep
  Whose waters feed the fountain's lip,
Lets tears of blood in silence weep
  Into my bosom drip by drip.

O Carnival of Venice! — theme
  So chilling sad, yet ever warm!
Where laughter toucheth tears supreme, —
  How hast thou hurt me with thy charm!

SYMPHONY IN WHITE MAJOR

In the Northern tales of eld,
From the Rhine's escarpments high
Swan-women radiant were beheld,
Singing and floating by,

Or, leaving their plumage bright
On a bough that was bending low,
Displaying skin more gleaming white
Than the white of their down of snow.

At times one comes our way, —
Of all she is pallidest,
White as the moonbeam's shivering ray
On a glacier's icy crest.

Her boreal bloom doth win
Our eyes to feasting rare
On rich delight of nacreous skin,
And a wealth of whiteness fair.

Her rounded breasts, pale globes
  Of snow, wage insolent war
With her camellias and her robes
  Of whiteness nebular.

In such white wars supreme
  She wins, and weft and flower
Leave their revenge's right, and seem
  Yellowed with envy's hour.

On the white of her shoulder bare,
  Whose marble Paros lends,
As through the Polar twilight fair,
  Invisible frost descends.

What beaming virgin snow,
  What pith a reed within,
What Host, what taper, did bestow
  The white of her matchless skin?

Was she made of a milky drop
  On the blue of a winter heaven?
The lily-blow on the stem's green top?
  The foam of the sea at even?

Of the marble still and cold,
  Wherein the great gods dwell?
Of creamy opal gems that hold
  Faint fires of mystic spell?

Or the organ's ivory keys?
  Her wingèd fingers oft
Like butterflies flit over these,
  With kisses pending soft.

Of the ermine's stainless fold,
  Whose white, warm touches fall
On shivering shoulders and on bold,
  Bright shields armorial?

Of the phantom flowers of frost
  Enscrolled on the window clear?
Of the fountain drop in the chill air lost,
  An Undine's frozen tear?

Of May bent low with the sweets
  Of her bountiful white-thorn bloom?
Of alabaster that repeats
  The pallor of grief and gloom?

Of the feathers of doves that slip
And snow on the gable steep?
Of slow stalactite's tear-white drip
In cavernous places deep?

Came she from Greenland floes
With Séraphita forth?
Is she Madonna of the Snows?
A sphinx of the icy North,

Sphinx buried by avalanche,
The glacier's guardian ghost,
Whose frozen secrets hide and blanch
In her white heart innermost?

What magic of what far name
Shall this pale soul ignite?
Ah! who shall flush with rose's flame
This cold, implacable white?

COQUETRY IN DEATH

I BEG ye grant, when low I lie,
Before ye close my coffin-bed,
A little black beneath mine eye,
And on my cheek a touch of red!

Ah, make me beautiful as now!
For I would be upon my bier,
As on the night of his avow
Charming and bloomful, gay and dear.

For me no linen winding-sheet!
But gown me very grand and bright.
Bring forth my frock of muslin sweet,
With many ruffles soft and white.

My favourite frock! I wore it well,
Who wore it at love's flowering.
And since his look upon it fell,
I've kept it as a sacred thing.

For me no funeral coronet,
No tear-embroidered cushion place;
But o'er my fair lace pillow let
My hair droop free about my face.

Dear pillow! Often did it mark,
In mad, sweet nights our brows unlit,
And, all within the gondola dark,
Did count our kisses infinite.

About my waxen hands supine,
Folded in prayer at life's deep gloam,
My rosary of opals twine,
Blessed by His Holiness at Rome.

I 'll finger it, when bedded cold
Where never one shall rise. How oft
His lips upon my lips have told
A *Pater* and an *Ave* soft!

HEART'S DIAMOND

Every lover deep hath set
In a sacred nook apart
Some dear token for the heart
In its hope or its regret.

One hath nested safe away
Blackest ringlet ever seen,
Over which an azure sheen
Lieth, as on wing of jay.

One from shoulder pale as milk
Took a tress more golden-fine
Than the threads that softly shine
In the silk-worm's wonder-silk.

In its hiding mystical,
Memory's reliquary sweet,
Glances of another greet
Gloves with fingers white and small.

And another yet may list
To inhale a faint perfume
Of the violets from her room,
Freshly given — faded, kissed.

Here a slipper's curving grace
One with sighing treasureth.
There another guards a breath
In a mask's light edge of lace.

I've no slipper to revere,
Neither glove nor tress nor flower;
But I cherish for love's dower
A divine, adorèd tear, —

Fallen from the blue above,
Clearest dew, heaven's drop for me,
Pearl dissolvèd secretly
In the chalice of my love.

To mine eyes the dim-worn dew
Beams, a gem of Orient worth,
Standing from the parchment forth,
Diamond of a sapphire blue, —

Steadfast, lustreful and deep!
Tear that fell unhoped, unsought,
On a song my soul once wrought,
From an eye unused to weep.

SPRING'S FIRST SMILE

WHILE up and down the earth men pant and plod,
March, laughing at the showers and days unsteady,
And whispering secret orders to the sod,
For Spring makes ready.

And slyly when the world is sleeping yet,
He smooths out collars for the Easter daisies,
And fashions golden buttercups to set
In woodland mazes.

Coif-maker fine, he worketh well his plan.
Orchard and vineyard for his touch are prouder.
From a white swan he hath a down to fan
The trees with powder.

While Nature still upon her couch doth lean,
Stealthily hies he to the garden closes,
And laces in their bodices of green
Pale buds of roses.

Composing his solfeggios in the shade,
He whistles them to blackbirds as he treadeth,
And violets in the wood, and in the glade
Snowdrops, he spreadeth.

Where for the restless stag the fountain wells,
His hidden hand glides soft amid the cresses,
And scatters lily-of-the-valley bells,
In silver dresses.

He sinks the sweet, vermilion strawberries
Deep in the grasses for thy roving fingers,
And garlands leaflets for thy forehead's ease,
When sunshine lingers.

When, labour done, he must away, turns he
On April's threshold from his fair creating,
And calleth unto Spring: "Come, Spring — for see,
The woods are waiting!"

CONTRALTO

THERE lies within a great museum's hall,
Upon a snowy bed of carven stone,
A statue ever strange and mystical,
With some fair fascination all its own.

And is it youth or is it maiden sweet,
A goddess or a god come down to sway?
Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet,
Nor any word's avowal will betray.

Sideways it lieth, with averted face,
Stretching its lovely limbs, half mischievous,
Unto the curious crowd, an idle grace
Lighting its marble form luxurious.

For fashioning of its evil beauty brought
The sexes twain each one its magic dower.
Man whispers "Aphrodite!" in his thought,
And woman "Eros!" wondering at its power.

Uncertain sex and certain grace, that seem
To melt forever in a fountain's kiss,
Waters that whelm the body as they gleam
And merge, and it is one with Salmacis.

CONTRALTO

Ardent chimera, effort venturesome
Of Art and Pleasure — figure fanciful!
Into thy presence with delight I come,
Loving thy beauty strange and multiple.

Though I may never close to thee draw nigh,
How often have my glances pierced the taut,
Straight fold of thine austerest drapery,
Fast at the end about thine ankle caught!

O dream of poet passing every bound!
My thought hath built a fancy of thy form,
Till it is molten into silver sound,
And boy and girl are one in cadence warm.

O tone divine, O richest tone of earth,
The beautiful, bright statue's counterpart!
Contralto, thou fantastical of birth,
The voice's own Hermaphrodite thou art!

Thou art the plaintive dove, the linnet rare,
Perched on one rose tree, mellow in one note.
Thou art fair Juliet and Romeo fair,
Singing across the night with one warm throat.

Thou art the young wife of the castellan,
  Chaffing an amorous page below her bower, —
Upon her balcony the lady wan,
  The lover at the base of her high tower.

Thou art the yellow butterfly that swings,
  Pursuing soft a butterfly of snow,
In spiral flights and subtle traversings,
  One winging high, the other winging low;

The angel flitting up and down the gold
  Of the bright stair's aerial extent,
The bell in whose alloy of mighty mould
  Are voice of bronze and voice of silver blent

Yea, melody and harmony art thou,
  Song with its true accompaniment, and grace
Matched unto force, — the woman plighting vow
  To her Belovèd with a close embrace;

Or thou art Cinderella doomed to spend
  Her night before the embers of the fire,
Deep in a conversation with her friend,
  The cricket, as the latter hours expire;

Or Arsaces, the great and valorous,
Waging his righteous battle for a realm,
Or Tancred with his breastplate luminous,
Cuirassed and splendid with his sword and helm;

Or Desdemona with her willow song,
Zerlina laughing at Mazetto, or
Malcolm, his plaid upon his shoulder strong.
Thee, O thou dear Contralto, I adore!

For these thou art, thou dearest charm of each,
O fair Contralto, double-throated dove!
The Kaled of a Lara, for thy speech,
Thou mightest, like the lost Gulnare, prove, —

In whose heart-stirring, passionate caress
In one wild, tremulous note there blend and mount
A woman's sigh of plaintive tenderness,
And virile accents from a firmer fount.

EYES OF BLUE

A WOMAN, mystic, sweet,
Whose beauty draws my soul,
Stands silent where the fleet
And singing waters roll.

Her eyes, the mirrored note
Of heaven, merge heaven's blue
Bestarred of lights remote,
With the sea's glaucous hue.

Within their languor set,
Smiles sadness infinite.
Tears make the sparkles wet,
And tender grows the light.

Like sea-gulls from aloft
That graze the ocean free,
Her lashes flutter soft
Upon an azure sea.

As slumbering treasures drowned
Send shimmers lightly up,
Gleams through the tide profound
The King of Thule's cup.

Athwart the weedy swirl
Brilliant, the waves upon,
Shine Cleopatra's pearl,
And ring of Solomon.

The crown to ocean cast,
That Schiller showed to us,
Still under sea caught fast,
Beams clear and luminous.

A magic in that gaze
Draws me, mad venturer!
Thus mermaid's magic ways
Drew Harold Haarfager.

And all my soul unquelled
Adown the gulf betrayed
Dives, to the quest impelled
Of some elusive shade.

The siren fitfully
Displays her body's gleam,
Her breast and arms that ply
Through waves of amorous dream.

The water heaves and falls,
  Like breasts with passion's breath.
The breeze insistent calls
  To me, and murmureth:

Come to my pearly bed!
  My ocean arms shall slip
About thee: salt shall spread
  To honey on thy lip!

Oh, let the billows link
  Above us! Thou shalt, warm,
From cup of kisses drink
  Oblivion of the storm!"

Thus sighs the glance that sweeps
  From out those sea-blue gates,
Till heart down treacherous deeps
  The hymen consummates.

THE TOREADOR'S SERENADE

RONDALLA

Child with airs imperial,
  Dove with falcon's eyes for me
Whom thou hatest, — come I shall
  Underneath thy balcony!

There, my foot upon the stone,
  I shall twang my chords with grace,
Till thy window-pane hath shone
  With thy lamplight and thy face.

Let no lad with his guitar
  Strum adown the bordering ways.
Mine the road to watch and bar,
  Mine alone to sing thy praise.

Let the first my courage brave.
  He shall lose his ears, egad!
Who shall howl his love and rave
  In a couplet good or bad.

Restless doth my dagger lie.
Come! who'll venture its rebuff?
Who would wear for every sigh
Blood's red flower upon his ruff?

Blood grows weary of its veins;
For it yearns to be displayed.
Night is ominous with rains.
Haste, ye cowards, back to shade!

On, thou braggart, else aroint!
Well thy forearm cover thou.
On! and with my dagger's point
Let me write upon thy brow.

Let them come, alone, in mass:
Firm of foot I bide my place.
For thy glory, as they pass,
Would I slit each paltry face.

O'er the gutter ere thy clear,
Snowy feet shall be defiled,
By the Rood! a bridge I 'll rear
With the bones of gallants wild.

I would slay, thy love to wear,
  Any foe, yea, even proud
Satan's very self to dare,
  So thy sheets became my shroud.

Sightless window, deafened door!
  Wilt thou never heed my sounds?
Like a wounded bull I roar,
  Maddening the baying hounds.

Drive at least a poor nail then,
  Where my heart may hang inert.
For I want it not again,
  With its madness and its hurt!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

THE OBELISK IN PARIS

Distant from my native land,
Ever dull with ennui's pain,
Lonely monolith I stand,
In the snow and frost and rain.

And my shaft, once burnt to red
In a flaming heaven's glare,
Taketh on a pallor dead
In this never azure air.

Oh, to stand again before
Luxor's pylons, and the dear,
Grim Colossi! — be once more
My vermilion brother near!

Oh, to pierce the changeless blue,
Where of old my peak upwon,
With my shadow sharp and true
Trace the footsteps of the sun!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

Once, O Rameses! my tall mass
Not the ages could destroy.
But it fell cut down like grass.
Paris took it for a toy.

Now my granite form behold:
Sentinel the livelong day
Twixt a spurious temple old,
And the *Chambre des Députés!*

On the spot where *Louis Seize*
Died, they set me, meaningless,
With my secret which outweighs
Cycles of forgetfulness.

Sparrows lean defile my head,
Where the ibis used to light,
And the fierce gypætus spread
Talons gold and plumage white.

And the Seine, the drip of street,
Unclean river, crime's abyss,
Now befouls mine ancient feet,
Which the Nile was wont to kiss:

Hoary Nile that, crowned and stern,
To its lotus-laden shores
From its ever bended urn
Crocodiles for gudgeon pours!

Golden chariots gem-belit
Of the Pharaohs' pageanting
Grazed my side the cab-wheels hit,
Bearing out the last poor king.

By my granite shape of yore
Passed the priests, with stately pschent,
And the mystic boat upbore,
Emblemed and magnificent.

But to-day, profane and wan,
Camped between two fountains wide,
I behold the courtesan
In her carriage lounge with pride.

From the first of year to last
I must see the vulgar show —
Solons to the Council passed,
Lovers to the woods that go!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

Oh, what skeletons abhorred,
  Hence, an hundred years, this race!
Couched, unbandaged, on a board,
  In a nailèd coffin's place.

Never hypogeum kind,
  Safe from foul corruption's fear;
Never hall where century-lined
  Generations disappear!

Sacred soil of hieroglyph,
  And of sacerdotal laws,
Where the Sphinx is waiting stiff,
  Sharpening on the stone its claws,—

Soil of crypt where echoes part,
  Where the vulture swoopeth free,
All my being, — all my heart,
  O mine Egypt, weeps for thee!

THE OBELISK IN LUXOR

Where the wasted columns brood,
  Lonely sentinel stand I,
In eternal solitude
  Facing all infinity.

Dumb, with beauty unendowed,
  To the horizon limitless
Spreads earth's desert like a shroud
  Stained by yellow suns that press.

While above it, blue and clean,
  Is another desert cast —
Sky where cloud is never seen,
  Pure, implacable, and vast.

And the Nile's great water-course
  Glazed with leaden pellicle
Wrinkled by the river-horse
  Gleameth dead, unlustreful.

All about the flaming isles,
  By a turbid water spanned,
Hot, rapacious crocodiles
  Swoon and sob upon the sand.

Perching motionless, alone,
Ibis, bird of classic fame,
From a carven slab of stone
Reads the moon-god's sacred name.

Jackals howl, hyenas grin,
Famished hawks descend and cry.
Down the heavy air they spin,
Commas black against the sky.

These the sounds of solitude,
Where the sphinxes yawn and doze,
Dull and passionless of mood,
Weary of their endless pose.

Child of sand's reflected shine,
And of sun-rays fiercely bent,
Is there ennui like to thine,
Spleen of luminous Orient?

Thou it was cried "Halt!" of yore
To satiety of kings.
Thou hast crushed me more and more
With thine awful weight of wings.

Here no zephyr of the sea
  Wipes the tears from skies that fill.
Time himself leans wearily
  On the palaces long still.

Naught shall touch the features terse
  Of this dull, eternal spot.
In this changing universe,
  Only Egypt changeth not!

When the ennui never ends,
  And I yearn a friend to hold,
I 've the fellahs, mummies, friends,
  Of the dynasties of old.

I behold a pillar pale,
  Or a chipped Colossus note,
Watch a distant, gleaming sail
  Up and down the Nile afloat.

Oh, to seek my brother's side,
  In a Paris wondrous, grand,
With his stately form to bide,
  In the public place to stand!

For he looks on living men,
And they scan his pictures wrought
By an hieratic pen,
To be read by vision-thought.

Fountains fair as amethyst
On his granite lightly pour
All their irisated mist.
He is growing young once more.

Ah! yet he and I had birth
From Syene's veins of red.
But I keep my spot of earth.
He is living. I am dead.

VETERANS OF THE OLD GUARD

(December 15)

Driven by ennui from my room,
I walked along the Boulevard.
'T was in December's mist and gloom.
A bitter wind was blowing hard.

And there I saw — strange thing to see! —
In drizzle and in daylight drear,
From out their dark abodes let free,
Dim, spectral shadow-shapes appear.

Yet 't is by night's uncanny hours,
By pallid German moonbeams cast
On old dilapidated towers,
That ghosts are wont to wander past.

It is by night's effulgent star
In dripping robes that elves intrigue
To bear beneath the nenuphar
Their dancer dead of his fatigue.

At night's mysterious tide hath been
The great review — of ballad writs —
Wherein the Emperor, dimly seen,
Numbered the shades of Austerlitz.

But phantoms near the *Gymnase?* — yea,
And wet and miry phantoms, too,
And close to the *Variétés,*
And not a shroud to trick the view!

With yellow teeth and stainèd dress,
And mossy skull and piercèd shoon,
Paris — Montmartre — behold it press, —
Death in the very light of noon!

Ah, 't is a picture to be seen!
Three veteran ghosts in uniform
Of the Old Guard, and, spare and lean,
Two ghost-hussars in daylight's storm.

The lithograph, you would surmise,
Wherein one ray shines down upon
The dead, that Raffet deifies,
That pass and shout "Napoleon!"

No dead are these, whom nightly drum
  May rouse to battle fires that burn,
But stragglers of the Old Guard, come
  To celebrate the grand return!

Since fighting in the fight supreme,
  One has grown thin, another stout;
The coats that fitted once now seem
  Too small, too loose, or draggled out.

O epic rags! O tatters light,
  Starred with a cross! Heroic things
Of ridicule, ye gleam more bright,
  More beautiful than robes of kings!

Limp feathers fluttering adorn
  The tawny colbacks worn and grim.
The bullet and the moth have torn
  And riddled well the dolmans dim.

Their leathern breeches loosely hang
  In furrows on their lank thigh-bones,
Their rusty sabres drag and clang,
  As heavily they scrape the stones.

Or some round belly firm and fat,
  Squeezed tight in tether labour-donned,
Makes mirth and jest to chuckle at —
  Old hero quaint and cheveroned!

But do not mock and jeer, my lad.
  Salute him, rather, and, believe,
Achilles he, of Iliad
  That Homer's self could not conceive.

Respect these men with battle signs
  That twenty skies have painted brown;
Their scars that lengthen out the lines
  Of wrinkles age has written down;

Their skin whose colour deep and dun,
  Bared to the fronts of many foes,
Tells us of Egypt's burning sun;
  Their locks that tell of Russia's snows.

And if they shake, no longer strong?
  Ah! Beresina's wind was cold.
And if they limp? The way was long,
  From Cairo unto Vilna told.

If they be stiff? They 'd but a flag
For sheet to hold their bodies warm.
And if a sleeve be loose, poor rag?
'T is that a bullet tore an arm.

Mock not these veteran shapes bizarre,
At whom the urchin laughs and gapes.
They were the day, of which we are
The evening, and the night, perhaps, —

Remembering if we forget —
Red lancer, grenadier in blue,
With faces to the Column set,
As to their only altar true.

There, proud of pain each scar denotes,
And of long miseries gone by,
They feel beneath their shabby coats
The heart of France beat mightily.

And so our smiles are steeped in tears,
Seeing this holy carnival,
This picture wan that reappears,
Like morning after midnight's ball.

And, cleaving heaven its own to claim,
Wide the Grand Army's eagle spreads
Its golden wings, like glory's flame,
Above their dear and hallowed heads.

SEA-GLOOM

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance,
The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of ocean as they rear and prance
And toss their manes in stormy strength.

The day is ending. Raindrops choke
The sunset furnaces. The gloom
Brings the great steamboat spitting smoke,
And beating down its long black plume.

And I, more wan than heaven wide,
For land of soot and fog am bound,
For land of smoke and suicide —
And right good weather have I found!

How eagerly I now would pierce
The gulf that groweth wild and hoar!
The vessel rocks. The waves are fierce.
The salt wind freshens more and more.

Ah! bitter is my soul's unrest.
The very ocean sighing heaves
In pity its unhopeful breast,
Like some good friend that knows and grieves.

Let be — lost love's despair supreme!
Let be — illusions fair that rose
And fell from pedestals of dream!
One leap! The dark wet ridges close.

Away! ye sufferings gone by,
That evermore returning brood,
And press the wounds that sleeping lie,
To make them weep afresh their blood.

Away! regret, whose crimson heart
Hath seven swords. Yea, One, maybe,
Doth know the anguish and the smart —
Mother of Seven Sorrows, She!

Each ghostly grief sinks down the vast,
And struggles with the waves that throb
To close about it, and at last
Drown it forever with a sob.

Soul's ballast, treasures of life's hand,
Sink! and we 'll wreck together down.
Pale on the pillow of the sand
I 'll rest me well at evening brown.

But, now, a woman, as I gaze,
  Sits in the bridge's darker nook,
A woman, who doth sweetly raise
  Her eyes to mine in one long look.

'T is Sympathy with outstretched arms,
  Who smileth to me through the gray
Of dusk with all her thousand charms.
  Hail, azure eyes! Green sea, away!

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance.
  The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of Ocean as they rear and prance
  And toss their manes in stormy strength.

TO A ROSE-COLOURED GOWN

How I love you in the robes
That disrobe so well your charms!
Your dear breasts, twin ivory globes,
And your bare sweet pagan arms.

Frail as frailest wing of bee,
Fresher than the heart of rose,
All the fabric delicate, free,
Round your body gleams and glows,

Till from skin to silken thread,
Silver shivers lightly win,
And the rosy gown have shed
Roses on the creamy skin.

Whence have you the mystic thing,
Made of very flesh of you,
Living mesh to mix and cling
With your glorious body's hue?

Did you take it from the rud
Of the dawn? From Venus' shell?
From a breast-flower nigh to bud?
From a rose about to swell?

Doth the texture have its dye
From some blushing bashfulness?
No — your portraits do not lie —
Beauty beauty's form shall guess!

Down you cast your garment fair,
Art-dreamed, sweet Reality,
Like Borghese's princess, rare
For Canova's mastery!

Ah! the folds are lips of fire
Sweeping round your lovely form
In a folly of desire,
With a weft of kisses warm!

THE WORLD'S MALICIOUS

Ah, little one, the world 's malicious!
With mocking smiles thy beauty greeting.
It says that in thy breast capricious
A watch, and not a heart, is beating.

Yet like the sea thy breast is swelling
With all the wild, tumultuous power
A tide of blood sends pulsing, welling,
Beneath thy flesh in life's young hour.

Ah, little one, the world is spiteful!
It says thy vivid eyes are fooling,
And that they have their charm delightful
From faithful, diplomatic schooling.

Yet on thy lashes' shifting curtain
An iridescent tear-drop trembles,
Like dew unbidden and uncertain,
That no well-water's gleam resembles.

Ah, little one, the world reviles thee!
It says thou hast no spirit's favour,
That verse, which seemingly beguiles thee,
Hath unto thee a Sanskrit savour.

Yet to thy crimson lips inviting,
  Intelligence's bee of laughter,
At every flash of wit alighting,
  Allures and gleams, and lingers after.

Ah, little one, I know the trouble!
  Thou lovest me. The world, it guesses.
Leave me, and hear its praises bubble: —
  "*What heart, what spirit, she possesses!*"

INES DE LAS SIERRAS

To PETRA CAMARA

In Spain, as Nodier's pen has told,
Three officers in night's mid hours
Came on a castle dark and old,
With sunken eaves and mouldering towers,

A true Anne Radcliffe type it was,
With ruined halls and crumbling rooms
And windows graven by the claws
Of Goya's bats that ranged the glooms.

Now while they feasted, gazed upon
By ancient portraits standing guard
In their ancestral frames, anon
A sudden cry rang thitherward.

Forth from a distant corridor
That many a moonbeam's pallid hue
Fretted fantastically o'er,
A wondrous phantom sped in view.

With bodice high and hair comb-tipped,
A woman, running, dancing, hied.
Adown the dappled gloom she dipped,—
An iridescent form descried.

A languid, dead, voluptuous mood
Filled every act's abandon brief,
Till at the door she stopped, and stood
Sinister, lovely past belief.

Her raiment crumpled in the tomb
Showed here and there a spangle's foil.
At every start a faded bloom
Dropped petals in her hair's black coil.

A dull scar crossed her bloodless throat,
As of a knife. Like rattle chill
Of teeth, her castanets she smote
Full in their faces awed and still.

Ah, poor bacchante, sad of grace!
So wild the sweetness of her spell,
The curvèd lips in her white face
Had lured a saint from heaven to hell!

Like darkling birds her eyelashes
Upon her cheek lay fluttering light.
Her kirtle's swinging cadences
Displayed her limbs of lustrous white.

She bowed amid a mist of gyres,
And with her hand, as dancers may,
Like flowers she gathered up desires,
And grouped them in a bright bouquet.

Was it a wraith or woman seen,
A thing of dreams, or blood and flesh,
The flame that burst from out the sheen
Of beauty's undulating mesh?

It was a phantom of the past,
It was the Spain of olden keep,
Who, at the sound of cheer at last,
Upbounded from her icy sleep,

In one bolero mad, supreme,
Rough-resurrected, powerful,
Showing beneath her kirtle's gleam
The ribbon wrested from the bull.

About her throat the scar of red
The deathblow was, dealt silently
Unto a generation dead
By every new-born century.

I saw this self-same phantom fleet,
All Paris ringing with her praise,
When soft, diaphanous, mystic, sweet,
La Petra Camara held its gaze, —

Closing her eyes with languor rare,
Impassive, passionate of art,
And, like the murdered Ines fair,
Dancing, a dagger in her heart.

ODELET

AFTER ANACREON

POET of her face divine,
Curb this over-zeal of thine!
Doves wing frighted from the ground
At a step's too sudden sound,
And her passion is a dove,
Frighted by too bold a love.
Mute as marble Hermes wait
By the blooming hawthorn-gate.
Thou shalt see her wings expand,
She shall flutter to thy hand.
On thy forehead thou shalt know
Something like a breath of snow,
Or of pinions pure that beat
In a whirl of whiteness sweet.
And the dove, grown venturesome,
Shall upon thy shoulder come,
And its rosy beak shall sip
From the nectar of thy lip.

SMOKE

Beneath yon tree sits humble
  A squalid, hunchbacked house,
  With roof precipitous,
And mossy walls that crumble.

Bolted and barred the shanty.
  But from its must and mould,
  Like breath of lips in cold,
Comes respiration scanty.

A vapour upward welling,
  A slender, silver streak,
  To God bears tidings meek
Of the soul in the little dwelling.

APOLLONIA

Fair Apollonia, name august,
  Greek echo of the sacred vale,
Great name whose harmonies robust
  Thee as Apollo's sister hail!

Struck with the plectrum on the lyre,
  And in melodious beauty sung,
Brighter than love's and glory's fire,
  It resonant rings upon the tongue.

At such a classic sound as this,
  The elves plunge down their German lake.
Alone the Delphian worthy is
  So lustreful a name to take, —

Pythia! when in her flowing dress
  She mounts her place with feet unshod,
And, priestess white and prophetess,
  Wistful awaits the tardy god.

THE BLIND MAN

A BLIND man walks without the gate,
  Wild-staring as an owl by day,
Fumbling his flute betimes and late,
  Along the way.

He pipeth, weary wretch and worn,
  A roundel shrill and obsolete.
The spectre of a dog forlorn
  Attends his feet.

For him the days go lustreless.
  Invisible life with beat and roar
He heareth like a torrent press
  Around, before.

What strange chimeras haunt his head?
  And on his mind's bedarkened space,
What characters unheard, unread,
  Doth fancy trace?

Thus down Venetian leads of doom,
  Wan prisoners ensepulchred
In palpable, undying gloom
  Have graven their word.

And yet perchance when life's last spark
Death speeds unto eternal night,
The tomb-bred soul, within the dark,
Shall see the light.

SONG

In April earth is white and rose
  Like youth and love, now tendering
Her smiles, now fearful to disclose
  Her virgin heart unto the Spring.

In June, a little pale and worn,
  And full at heart of vague desire,
She hideth in the yellow corn,
  With sunburned Summer to respire.

In August, wild Bacchante, she
  Her bosom bares to Autumn shapes,
And on the tiger-skin flung free,
  Draws forth the purple blood of grapes.

And in December, shrivelled, old,
  Bepowdered white from foot to head,
In dream she wakens Winter cold,
  That sleeps beside her in her bed.

WINTER FANTASIES

I

Red of nose and white of face,
Bent his desk of ice before,
Winter doth his theme retrace
In the season's quatuor, —

Beating measure and the ground
With a frozen foot for us,
Singing with uncertain sound
Olden tunes and tremulous.

And as Haendel's wig sublime
Trembling shook its powder, oft
Flutter as he taps his time
Snow-flakes in a flurry soft.

II

In the Tuileries fount the swan
Meets the ice, and all the trees,
As in land of fairies wan,
Are bedecked with filigrees.

Flowers of frost in vases low
Stand unquickened and unstirred,
And we trace upon the snow
Starrèd footsteps of a bird.

Where with lightest raiment spanned,
Venus was with Phocion met,
Now has Winter's hoary hand
Clodion's "Chilly Maiden" set.

III

Women pass in ermine dress,
Sable, too, and miniver,
And the shivering goddesses
Haste to don the fashion's fur.

Venus of the Brine comes forth,
In her hooded mantle's fluff.
Flora, blown by breezes North,
Hides her fingers in her muff.

And the shepherdesses round
Of Coustou and Coysevox,
Finding scarves too light have wound
Furs about their throats of snow.

IV

Heavy doth the North bedrape
Paris mode from foot to top,
As o'er fair Athenian shape
Scythian should a bearskin drop.

Over winter's garments meet,
Everywhere we see the fur,
Flung with Russian pomp, and sweet
With the fragrant vetiver.

Pleasure's laughing glances feast
Far amid the statues, where
From the bristles of a beast
Bursts a Venus torso fair!

V

If you venture hitherward,
With a tender veil to cheat
Glances over-daring, guard
Well your Andalusian feet!

Snow shall fashion like a frame
On your foot's impression rare,
Signing with each step your name
On the carpet soft and vair.

Thus were surly master led
To the hidden trysting-place,
Where his Psyche, faintly red,
Were beheld in Love's embrace.

THE BROOK

NEAR a great water's waste
A brook mid rock and spar
Came bubbling up in haste,
As though to travel far.

It sang: "What joy to rise!
'T was dismal under ground.
I mirror now the skies.
My banks with green abound.

"Forget-me-nots — how fair!
Beseech me from the grass;
Wings frolic in the air,
And graze me as they pass.

"I yet shall be — who knows? —
A river winding down,
And greeting as it flows
Valley and cliff and town.

"I 'll broider with my spray
Stone bridge and granite quay,
And bear great ships away
Unto the long wide sea."

So planned it, babbling by,
As water boiling fast
Within a basin high,
To top its brim at last.

Cradle by tomb is crossed.
Giants are early dead.
Scarce born, the brook was lost
Within a lake's deep bed.

TOMBS AND FUNERAL PYRES

No grim cadaver set its flaw
In happy days of pagan art,
And man, content with what he saw,
Stripped not the veil from beauty's heart.

No form once loved that buried lay,
A hideous spectre to appal,
Dropped bit by bit its flesh away,
As one by one our garments fall;

Or, when the days had drifted by
And sundered shrank the vaulted stones,
Showed naked to the daring eye
A motley heap of rattling bones.

But, rescued from the funeral pyre,
Life's ashen, light residuum
Lay soft, and, spent the cleansing fire,
The urn held sweet the body's sum, —

The sum of all that earth may claim
Of the soul's butterfly, soul passed, —
All that is left of spended flame
Upon the tripod at the last.

Between acanthus leaves and flowers
In the white marble gaily went
Loves and bacchantes all the hours,
Dancing about the monument.

At most, a little Genius wild
Trampled a flame out in the gloom,
And art's harmonious flowering smiled
Upon the sadness of the tomb.

The tomb was then a pleasant place.
As bed of child that slumbereth,
With many a fair and laughing grace
The joy of life surrounded death.

Then death concealed its visage gaunt,
Whose sockets deep, and sunken nose,
And railing mouth our spirits haunt,
Past any dream that horror shows.

The monster in flesh raiment clad
Hid deep its spectral form uncouth,
And virgin glances, beauty-glad,
Sped frankly to the naked youth.

'Twas only at Trimalchio's board
A little skeleton made sign,
An ivory plaything unabhorred,
To bid the feasters to the wine.

Gods, whom Art ever must avow,
Ruled the marmoreal sky's demesne.
Olympus yields to Calvary, now;
Jupiter to the Nazarene!

Voices are calling, "Pan is dead!
Dusk deepeneth within, without.
On the black sheet of sorrow spread,
The whitened skeleton gleams out.

It glideth to the headstone bare,
And signs it with a paraph wild,
And hangs a wreath of bones to glare
Upon the charnel death-defiled.

It lifts the coffin-lid and quaffs
The musty air, and peers within,
Displays a ring of ribs, and laughs
Forever with its awful grin.

It urges unto Death's fleet dance
The Emperor, the Pope, the King,
And makes the pallid steed to prance,
And low the doughty warrior fling; —

Behind the courtesan steals up,
And makes wry faces in her glass;
Drinks from the sick man's trembling cup;
Delves in the miser's golden mass.

Above the team it whirls the thong,
With bone for goad to hurry it,
Follows the plowman's way along,
And guides the furrows to a pit.

It comes, the uninvited guest,
And lurks beneath the banquet chair,
Unseen from the pale bride to wrest
Her little silken garter fair.

The number swells: the young give hand
Unto the old, and none may flee.
The irresistible saraband
Compelleth all humanity.

Forth speeds the tall, ungainly fright,
Playing the rebeck, dancing mad,
Against the dark a frame of white,
As Holbein drew it — horror-sad; —

Or if the times be frivolous,
Trusses the shroud about its hips:
Then like a Cupid mischievous,
Across the ballet-room it skips,

And unto carven tombs it flies,
Where marchionesses rest demure,
Weary of love, in exquisite guise,
In chapels dim and pompadour.

But hide thy hideous form at last,
Worm-eaten actor! Long enough
In death's wan melodrama cast,
Thou 'st played thy part without rebuff.

Come back, come back, O ancient Art!
And cover with thy marble's gleam
This Gothic skeleton! Each part
Consume, ye flames of fire supreme!

If man be then a creature made
In God's own image, to aspire,
When shattered must the image fade,
Let the lone fragments feed the fire!

Immortal form! Rise thou in flame
Again to beauty's fount of bloom
Let not thy clay endure the shame,
The degradation of the tomb!

BJORN'S BANQUET

Bjorn, odd and lonely cenobite,
High on a barren rock's plateau,
Far out of time's and the world's sight,
Dwells in a castle none may know.

No modern thought may violate
His darkened and secluded hall.
Bjorn bolts with care his postern-gate,
And barricades his castle wall.

When others wait the rising sun,
He from his mouldering parapet
Still contemplates the valley dun,
Where he beheld the red sun set.

Securely doth the past enlock
His retrospective spirit lone.
The pendulum within his clock
Was broken centuries agone.

Waking the echoes wanders he
Beneath his feudal arches drear,
His ringing footsteps seemingly
Followed by other footsteps clear.

Nor priests nor friends with him make bold,
  Nor burghers plain nor gentlemen;
But his ancestral portraits hold
  A parley with him now and then.

And of a midnight, sparing him
  The ennui of a lonely cup,
Bjorn, harbouring a gloomy whim,
  Invites his ancestors to sup.

Forth stepping at the hour's grim stroke,
  Come phantoms armed from foot to head.
Bjorn, quaking, to the solemn folk
  Proffers with state the goblet red.

To seat itself each panoply
  With joints that grumble in revolt
Maketh an angle with its knee,
  That creaketh like a rusty bolt;

Till all at once the suit of mail,
  Rude coffin of an absent bulk,
Cleaving the silence with a wail,
  Falls in its chair, a clanking hulk.

Landgraves and burgraves, spare and stout,
Come down from heaven or up from hell,
The iron guests of many a bout,
Are bound within the midnight spell.

Their blow-indented helmets bear
Heraldic beasts that bay and grin,
Athwart the shades the red lights glare
On crest and ancient lambrequin.

Each empty, open casque now seems
Like to the helms of heraldries,
Save for two strange and livid gleams
That issue forth in threatening wise.

Seated is each old combatant
In the vast hall, at Bjorn's behest,
And the uncertain shadows grant
A swarthy page to every guest.

The liquors in the candle-shine
Take on suspicious purples. All
The viands in their gravy's wine
Grow lurid and fantastical.

Sometimes a breastplate glitters bright,
A morion speeds its flashes wroth,
A rondelle from a hand of might
Drops heavily upon the cloth.

Heard are the softly flapping wings
Of unseen bats. The shimmer flicks
Upon the carven panellings
The banners of the heretics.

The stiffly bended gauntlets play
In the dull glow incarnadine,
And, creaking, to the helmets gray
Pour bumpers full of Rhenish wine;

Or with their daggers keen of blade
Carve boars upon the plates of gold.
The corridor's uncanny shade
Hath clamours vague and manifold.

The orgy waxes riotsome —
One could not hear God's voice for it —
For when a phantom sups from home,
What wrong if he carouse a bit?

Now every ghostly care they drown
With jokes and jeers and loud guffaws.
A wine-cascade is running down
Each rusty helmet's iron jaws.

The full and rounded hauberks bulge,
And to the neck the river mounts.
Their eyes with liquid fire effulge.
They 're howling drunk, these valiant counts!

One through the salad idly wields
A foot; another scolds the sick.
Some like the lions on their shields
With gaping mouths the fancy trick.

In voice still hoarse from silence long
In the tomb's dampness and restraint,
Max playfully intones a song
Of thirteen hundred, crude and quaint.

Albrecht, of quarrelsome repute,
Stirs right and left a war intense,
And drubs about with fist and foot,
As once he drubbed the Saracens.

And heated Fritz his helmet doffs,
Not deeming he's a headless trunk.
Then down pell-mell mid roars and scoffs
Together roll the phantoms drunk.

Ah! 'T is a hideous battle-ground,
Where pots and weapons bang and scud,
Where every dead man through some wound
Doth vomit victuals up for blood.

And Bjorn observes them, sad of eye,
And haggard, while athwart the panes
The dawn comes creeping stealthily,
With blue, thin lights, and darkness wanes.

The prostrate mass of rusty brown
Pales like a torch in daylight's room,
Until the drunkest pours him down
At last the stirrup-cup of doom.

The cock crows loud. And with the day
Once more with haughty mien and bold,
Their revel-weary heads they lay
Upon their marble pillows cold.

THE WATCH

Now twice my watch have I taken,
And twice as I 've gazing sat,
The hand has pointed unshaken
To one — and it 's long past that!

The clock's light cadences linger.
The sun-dial laughs from the lawn,
And points with a long, gaunt finger
The path that its shade has drawn.

A steeple ironically
Calls the true time to me.
The belfry bell makes tally
And taunts me with accents free.

Ah, dead is the wretch! I sought not,
Last night, to my reverie sold,
Its ruby circle! I thought not
Of glimmering key of gold!

No longer I see with pleasure
The spring of the balance-wheel
Flit hither and there at measure,
Like a butterfly form of steel.

THE WATCH

When Hippogriff bears me, yearning,
Through skies of another sphere,
My soul-reft body goes turning
Wherever the steed may veer.

Eternity still is giving
Its gaze to the lifeless face.
Time seeketh the heart once living,
His ear at the old watch-case, —

That heart whose regular motion
Was followed within my breast
By wave-beats of life's full ocean!
Ah well! the watch is at rest.

But its brother is beating ever,
Steadfast and sturdy kept
By One Who forgetteth never, —
Who wound it the while I slept.

THE MERMAIDS

THERE's a sketch you may discover
By an artist of degree
Rime and metre quarrel over —
Théophile Kniatowski.

On the snowy foam that fringes
All the mantle of the brine,
Radiant with the sunlight's tinges,
Three mermaidens softly shine.

Like the drownèd lilies dancing
Turn they, as the spiral wave
Buoys their bodies hiding, glancing,
As they sink and rise and lave.

In their golden hair for dowers
They have twined with beauteous hands
Shells for diadems, and flowers
From the deep wild under sands.

Oysters pour a pearly hoarding
Their enrapturing throats to gem,
And the wave, its wealth according,
Tosses other pearls to them.

Borne above the crest of ocean
By a Triton hand and strong,
Twine they, beautiful of motion,
Under gleaming tresses long.

And the crystal water under,
Down the blue the glories pale
Of each lovely form of wonder,
Tapered to a shimmering tail.

Ah! But who the scaly swimmers
Would behold in modern day —
When a bust of ivory glimmers,
Cool from kisses of the spray?

Look! Oh, mingled truth and fable!
O'er the horizon steady plied,
Comes a vessel proud and stable,
Toward the mermaids terrified!

Tricoloured its flag is flaunted,
And it vomits vapour red,
And it beats the billows daunted,
Till the nymphs dive low for dread.

Fearlessly they did beleaguer
Triremes immemorial,
And the dolphins arched and eager
Waited for Arion's call.

This of old. But now the steamer —
Vulcan hurtling Venus' charms, —
Would destroy the siren gleamer,
With her fair, nude tail and arms.

Farewell myth! The boat that passes
Thinks to see on silver bar,
Where the widening billow glasses,
Porpoises that plunge afar.

TWO LOVE-LOCKS

Reviving languorous dreaming
Of conquered, conquering eye,
Upon thy forehead gleaming,
Two fairest love-locks lie.

I see them softly nesting,
Of wondrous, golden sheen,
Like little wheels come resting
From car of Mab the Queen;

Or bows of Cupid ready
To let the arrows fly,
Bent circlewise and steady
For archer's mastery.

One heart have I of passion.
Yet two love-locks are thine!
O brow of fickle fashion!
Whose heart is caught with mine?

THE TEA-ROSE

Most beautiful of all the roses
Is this half-open bud, whose bare,
Unpetalled heart a dream discloses
Of carmine very faint and fair.

I wonder, was it once a white rose,
Till butterfly too ardent spoke
A language soft, and in the light rose
A shyer, warmer tint awoke?

Its delicate fabric hath the colour
Of lovely and velutinous skin.
Its perfect freshness maketh duller
Environing hues incarnadine.

For as some rare patrician features
Eclipse the brows of ruddier gleam,
So masquerade as rustic creatures
Gay sisters of this rose supreme.

But, dear one, if your hand caress it,
And raise it for its sweet perfume,
Ere yet your velvet cheek shall press it,
'T will fade before a fairer bloom.

THE TEA-ROSE

No rose in all the world so tender,
That gloweth in the springtime fleet,
But shall its every charm surrender
Unto your seventeen years, my sweet.

A face hath more than petal's power:
A pure heart's blood that blushing flows
O'er youth's nobility, is flower
High sovereign over every rose.

CARMEN

Slender is Carmen, of lissome guise,
Her hair is black as the midnight's heart;
Dark circles are under her gypsy eyes,
Her swarthy skin is the devil's art.

The women will mock at her form and face;
But the men will follow her all the day.
Toledo's Archbishop (now save His Grace!)
Tones his mass at her knees, they say.

Nestled in warmth of her amber neck
Lies a massive coil, till she fling it down
To be a raiment to frame and deck
Her delicate body from foot to crown.

Then out from her pallid face with power
Her witching, terrible smiles compel.
Her mouth is a mystical poison-flower
That hath drawn its crimson from hearts in hell.

The haughtiest beauty must yield her fame,
When this strange vision shall dusk her sky.
For Carmen rules, and her glance's flame
Shall set the torch to satiety.

Wild, graceless Carmen! — Though yet this be,
Savour she hath of a world undreamt,
Of a world of wonder, whose salt young sea
Provoked a Venus to rise and tempt.

WHAT THE SWALLOWS SAY

AN AUTUMN SONG

The dry, brown leaves have dropped forlorn,
And lie amid the golden grass.
The wind is fresh both eve and morn.
But where are summer days, alas!

The tardy flowers the autumn stayed
For latter treasures now unfold.
The dahlia dons its gay cockade,
Its flaming cap the marigold.

Rain stirs the pool with pelt and shock.
The swallows to the roof repair,
Confabulating as they flock
And feel the winter in the air.

By hundreds gather they to vow
Their little yearnings and intents.
Saith one: "'T is fair in Athens now,
Upon the sun-warm battlements!

"Thither I go to take my nap
Upon the Parthenon high and free.
My cornice nest is in the gap
A cannon-ball made there for me."

And one: "A ceiling meets my needs
Within a Smyrna coffee-house,
Where Hadjis tell their amber beads
Upon the threshold luminous.

"I go and come above the folk,
While their chibouques their clouds upfling.
I skim along through silver smoke,
And graze the turbans with my wing."

Another: "There's a triglyph gray
On one of Baalbec's temples high.
'T is there I go to brood all day
Above my little family."

Another calleth, "My address
Is settled: 'At the Knights of Rhodes.'
In a dark colonnade's recess
I'll make the snuggest of abodes."

"Old age hath made me slow for flight,"
Declares a fifth; "I 'll rest at even
On Malta's terraces of white,
Where blue sea melts to blue of heaven."

A sixth: "In Cairo is my home,
Up in a minaret's retreat:
A twig or two, a bit of loam —
My winter lodgings are complete."

A last: "The Second Cataract
Shall mark my place — the nest of brown
A granite king doth hold intact
Within the circle of his crown."

And all together sing: "What miles
To-morrow shall have stretched beneath
Our fleeing swarm: — remembered isles,
Snow peaks, vast waters, lands of heath!"

With calls and cries and beat of wings,
Grown eager now and venturesome,
The swallows hold their twitterings,
To see the blight of winter come.

SCENE IN A SMYRNA COFFEE-HOUSE

A photogravure from a painting by F. A. Bridgman

And one: "A ceiling meets my needs,
Within a Smyrna coffee-house,
Where Hadjis tell their amber beads
Upon the threshold luminous."

COPYRIGHT 1904 BY GEORGE D. SPROUL.

And I — I understand them all,
Because the poet is a bird, —
Oh! but a sorry bird, and thrall
To a great lack, pressed heavenward.

It's Oh for wings! to seek the star,
To count the seas when day is done,
To breast the air with swallows far,
To verdant spring, to golden sun!

CHRISTMAS

Black is the sky and white the ground.
O ring, ye bells, your carol's grace!
The Child is born! A love profound
Beams o'er Him from His Mother's face.

No silken woof of costly show
Keeps off the bitter cold from Him.
But spider-webs have drooped them low,
To be His curtain soft and dim.

Now trembles on the straw downspread
The Little Child, the Star beneath.
To warm Him in His holy bed,
Upon Him ox and ass do breathe.

Snow hangs its fringes on the byre.
The roof stands open to the tryst
Of aureoled saints, that sweetly choir
To shepherds, "Come, behold the Christ!"

THE DEAD CHILD'S PLAY-THINGS

MARIE comes no more at call.
  She has wandered from her play.
Ah, how pitifully small
  Was the coffin borne away!

See — about the nursery floor
  All her little heritage:
Rubber ball and battledore,
  Tattered book and coloured page.

Poor forsaken doll! in vain
  Stretch your arms. She will not come.
Stopped forever is the train,
  And the music-box is dumb.

Some one touched it soft, apart,
  Where the silence is her name.
And what sinking of the heart
  At the plaintive note that came!

Ah, the anguish! when the tomb
Robs the cradle; when bereft
We discover in the gloom
Child toys that an angel left.

AFTER WRITING MY DRAMATIC REVIEW

My columns are ranged and steady,
  Upbearing, though sad forespent,
  The newspaper pediment,
And my review is ready.

Now for a week, poetaster,
  My door is bolted. Away,
  Thou still-born masterpiece, — aye,
Till Monday I am my master.

No melodrama shall whiten
  My labour with threadbare leaves.
  The warp that my fancy weaves
With silken flowers shall brighten.

Brief moment my spirit's warder,
  Ye voices of soul that float,
  I 'll hearken your sorrow's note,
Nor verses evoke to order.

Then deep in my glass regaining
The health of a day gone by, —
Old visions for company —
The bloom of my vintage draining,

The wine of my thought I 'll measure,
Wine virgin of alien glow,
Grapes trodden by life, that flow
From my heart at my heart's own pleasure!

THE CASTLE OF REMEMBRANCE

Before my hearth with head low-bowed
I dream, and strive to reach again,
Across the misty past's gray cloud,
Unto Remembrance's domain,

Where tree and house and upland way
Are blurred and blue like passing ghosts,
And the eye, ponder though it may,
Consults in vain the guiding-posts.

Now gropingly to gain a sight
Of all the buried world, I press
Through mystic marge of shade and light
And limbo of forgetfulness.

But white, diaphanous Memory stands,
Where many roadways meet and spread,
Like Ariadne, in my hands
Thrusting her little ball of thread.

Henceforth the way is all secure.
The shrouded sun hath reappeared,
And o'er the trees with vision sure
I see the castle tower upreared.

Beneath the boughs where day grows dark
With shower on shower of leaves down-poured
The dear old path through moss and bark
Still lengthens far its narrow cord.

But creeping-plant and bramble-spray
Have wrought a net to daunt me now.
The stubborn branch I force away
Swings fiercely back to lash my brow.

I come upon the house at last.
No window lit with lamp or face,
No breath of smoke from gables vast,
To touch with life the mouldering place!

Bridges are crumbling. Moats are still,
And slimed with rank, green refuse-flowers,
And tortuous waves of ivy fill
The crevices and choke the towers.

The portico in moonlight wanes.
  Time sculptures it to suit his whim.
And with the wash of many rains
  My coloured coat of arms is dim.

The door I open eagerly.
  The ancient hinges creak and halt.
A breath of dampness wafts to me
  The musty odour of the vault.

The hairy nettle sharp of sting,
  The coarse and broad-leafed burdock weed
In court-yard nooks are prospering,
  By spreading hemlocks canopied.

Upon two marble monsters near,
  That guard the mossy steps of stone,
The shadow of a tree falls clear,
  That in my absence has upgrown.

Sudden the lion sentinels raise
  Their paws, aggressive and malign,
And challenge me with their white gaze;
  But soft I breathe the countersign.

I pass. The old dog menaceth,
But falls back hushed, the shades amid.
My resonant footstep wakeneth
Crouched echoes in their corners hid.

Through yellow panes of glass a ray
Of dubious light creeps down the hall
Where ancient tapestries display
Apollo's fortunes from the wall.

Fair tree-bound Daphne still with grace
Stretches her tufted fingers green.
But in the amorous god's embrace
She fades, a formless phantom seen.

I watch divine Apollo stand,
Herdsman to acarus-riddled sheep,
The Muses Nine, a haggard band,
Upon a faded Pindus weep;

While Solitude in scanty gown
Traces " Desertion " in the dust
That through the air she sifteth down
Upon a marble stand august.

And now, among forgotten things,
I find, like sleepers manifold,
Pastels bedimmed, dark picturings,
Young beauties, and the friends of old.

My faltering fingers lift a crape, —
And lo, my love with look and lure!
With puffing skirts and prisoned shape!
Cidalise *à la* Pompadour!

A tender, blossoming rose she feels
Against her ribboned bodice pressed,
Whose lace half hides and half reveals
A snowy, azure-veinèd breast.

Within her eyes gleam sparkles lush,
As on the rime-kissed, deadened leaves.
Upon her cheek a purple flush —
Death's own cosmetic hue! — deceives.

She startles as I come before,
And fixeth soft on me her eyes,
Reproachfully forevermore,
Yet with a charm and witching wise.

Life bore me from thee at its will,
Yet on my heart thy name is laid,
Thou dead delight, that lingereth still,
Bedizened for the masquerade!

Envious of Art, fair Nature wrought
To overpass Murillo's fame,—
From Andalusia here she brought
The face that lights the second frame.

By some poetical caprice,
Our atmosphere of mist and cloud,
With rare exotic charm's increase
This other Petra Camara dowed.

Warm orange tones are gilding yet
Her lovely skin of roseate hue.
Her eyelids fair have lashes jet
That beams of sunshine filter through.

There shimmers fine a pearly gleam
Between her scarlet lips elate;
Her beauty flashes forth supreme—
A bright south summer pomegranate.

Long to the sound of Spain's guitar,
I told her praise 'mid song and glass.
She came alone one evenstar,
And all my room Alhambra was.

Farther I see a robust Fair,
With strong and gem-beladen arms.
In pearls of price and velvet rare
Are set her ivory bosom's charms.

Her ennui is a weary queen's,
An adulating court amid.
Superb, aloof, her hand she leans
Upon a casket's jewelled lid.

Her sensuous lips their crimes confess,
As crimson with the blood of hearts.
With brutal, mad voluptuousness
Her conquering eye a challenge darts.

Here dwells, in lieu of tender grace,
Vertiginous allure, whereof
A cruel Venus ruled a race,
Presiding o'er malignant love.

Unnatural mother to her child,
  This Venus all imperative!
O thou, my bitter joy and wild,—
  Farewell forever! I forgive!

Within its frame in shadow fine,
  The misty glass that still endures
Reveals another face than mine,—
  The earliest of my portraitures.

A retrospective ghost, with face
  Of vanished type, steps from the vast
Dim mirror of his biding-place
  In tenebrous, forgotten past.

Gay in his doublet satin-rose,
  Coloured in bold and vivid way,
He seems as if about to pose
  For Deveria or Boulanger.

Terror of glabrous commoner,
  His flowing locks in royal guise,
Like mane of lion, or sinister
  King's hair, fall heavy to his thighs.

Romanticist of bold conceit,
  Knight of an art which strives anew,
He hurled himself at Drama's feet,
  When erst Hernani's trumpet blew.

Night falls. The corners are astir
  With many shapes and shadows tall.
The Unknown — grim stage-carpenter —
  Sets up its darksome frights o'er all.

A sudden burst of candles, weird
  With aureoles, like lamps of death!
The room is populous, and bleared
  With folk brought hither by a breath!

Down step the portraits from the wall, —
  A ruddy-litten company!
Circling the fireplace in the hall,
  Where the wood blazes suddenly.

The figures wrested from the tombs
  Have lost their rigid, frozen mien,
The gradual glow of life illumes
  The Past with flush incarnadine.

A colour lights the faces pale,
As in the days of old delight.
Friends whom my thought shall never fail,
I thank ye, that ye came to-night!

Now eighteen-thirty shows to me
Its great and valiant-hearted men.
(Ah, like Otranto's pirates, we
Who were an hundred, are but ten!)

And one his reddish beard spreads out,
Like Barbarossa in his cave.
Another his mustachio stout
Curls at the ends in fashion suave.

Under the ample fold that cloaks
An ever unrevealèd ill,
Petrus a cigarette now smokes,
Naming it "papelito" still.

Another cometh, fain to tell
His visions and his hopes supreme.
Like Icarus on the sands he fell,
Where lie all broken shafts of dream.

And one a drama hath begot,
Planned after some new model's freak,
Which, merging all things in its plot,
Makes Calderon with Molière speak.

Tom, late forsaken by his Dear,
Love's Labour 's Lost must low recite;
And Fritz to Cidalise makes clear
Faust's vision of Walpurgis Night.

But dawn comes through the window free.
Diaphanous the phantoms grow.
The objects of reality
Strike through their shapes that merge and go.

The candles are consumed away.
The ember-lights no longer gleam
Upon the hearth. No thing shall stay.
Farewell, O castle of my dream!

December gray shall turn once more
The glass of Time, for all we fret!
The present enters at my door,
And vainly bids me to forget.

CAMELLIA AND MEADOW-DAISY

We praise the hot-house flowers that loom
Far from their native sun and shade,
The flaring forms that flaunt their bloom,
Like jewels under glass displayed.

With never breeze to kiss their heads,
They have their birth and live and die
On costly, artificial beds,
Beneath an ever-crystal sky.

For whomsoever idly scans,
Baring their treasures to entice,
Like fair and sumptuous courtesans,
They stand for sale at golden price.

Fine porcelain holds their gathered groups,
Or glove-clad fingers fondle them
Between the dances, till each droops
Upon a limp or broken stem.

But down amid the grass unreaped,
Shunning the curious, in repose
And silence all the long day steeped,
A little woodland daisy blows.

A butterfly upon the wing
To point the place, a casual look,
And you surprise the sweet, shy thing,
Within its calm, sequestered nook.

Beneath the blue it openeth,
Rising on slender, vernal rod,
Spreading its soul in fragrant breath
For solitude and for its God.

And proud camellias tall and white,
Red tulips in a flaming mass,
Are all at once forgotten quite,
For the small flower amid the grass.

THE FELLAH

On seeing a Water-Colour by Princess Mathilde

Caprice of brush fantastical,
And of imperial idleness,
Your fellah-sphinx presents us all
With an enigma worth the guess.

A rigid fashion, verily,
This mask, this garment, seem to us,
Intriguing with its mystery
The ball-room's every Œdipus.

Isis bequeathed her veil of old
To modern daughters of the Nile.
But through this band austere, behold,
Two stars of radiance beam and smile, —

Two stars, two eyes, two poems that spring,
The soft, voluptuous fires whereof
Resolve the riddle, murmuring:
"Lo, I am Beauty! Be thou Love!"

THE GARRET

From balcony tiles where casual cats
Sit low in wait for birds unwise,
I see the worn and riven slats
Of a poor, humble garret rise.

Now could I as an author lie,
To give you comfort as you think,
Its window I would falsify,
And frame with flowers refined and pink,

And place within it Rigolette
With her cheap looking-glass, somehow,
Whose broken glazing mirrors yet
A portion of her pretty brow;

Or Margery, her dress undone,
Her hair blown free, her tie forgot,
Watering in the pleasant sun
Her pail-encompassed garden-plot;

Or poet-youth whom fame awaits,
Who scans his verse and eyes the hills,
Or in a reverie contemplates
Montmartre with its distant mills.

Alas! my garret is no feint.
There climbeth no convolvulus.
The window with its nibbled paint
Leers filmy and unluminous.

Alike for artist and grisette,
Alike for widower and lad,
A garret — save to music set —
Is never otherwise than sad.

Of old, beneath an angle pent,
That forced the forehead to a kiss,
Love, with a folding-couch content,
To chat with Susan deemed it bliss.

But we must wad our bliss about
With cushioned walls and laces wide,
And silks that flutter in and out,
O'er beds by Monbro canopied.

This evening, to Mount Breda fled
Is Rigolette, to linger there,
And Margery, well clothed and fed,
No longer tends her garden fair.

The poet, tired of catching rimes
  Upon the wing, has turned to cull
Reporter's bays, and left betimes
  A heaven for an entresol.

And in the window this is all:
  An ancient goody chattering,
And railing at a kitten small
  That toys forever with a string.

THE CLOUD

Lightly in the azure air
  Soars a cloud, emerging free
Like a virgin from the fair
    Blue sea;

Or an Aphrodite sweet,
  Floating upright and empearled
In the shell, about its feet
    Foam-curled.

Undulating overhead,
  How its changing body glows!
On its shoulder dawn hath spread
    A rose.

Marble, snow, blend amorously
  In that form by sunlight kissed —
Slumbering Antiope
    Of mist!

Sailing unto distant goal,
  Over Alps and Apennines,
Sister of the woman-soul,
    It shines;

Till my heart flies forth at last
On the wings of passion warm,
And I yearn to gather fast
Its form.

Reason saith: "Mere vapour thing!
Bursting bubble! Yet, we deem,
Holds this wind-distorted ring
Our dream."

Faith declareth: "Beauty seen,
Like a cloud, is but a thought,
Or a breath, that, having been,
Is naught.

"Have thy vision. Build it proud.
Let thy soul be full thereof.
Love a woman — love a cloud —
But love!"

THE BLACKBIRD

A BIRD from yonder branch at dawn
Is trilling forth a joyful note,
Or hopping o'er the frozen lawn,
In yellow boots and ebon coat.

It is the blackbird credulous.
Little of calendar knows he,
Whose soul, with sunbeams luminous,
Sings April to the snows that be.

Rain sweeps in torrents unrepressed.
The Arve makes dull the Rhone with mire.
The pleasant hall retains its guest
In goodly cheer before the fire.

The mountains have their ermine on,
Each one a mighty magistrate,
And hold grave conference upon
A case of Winter lasting late.

The bird dries well his wing, and long,
Despite the rains, the mists that roll,
Insists upon his little song,
Believes in Spring with all his soul.

He softly chides the slumberous morn
For dallying so long abed,
And bids the shivering flower forlorn
Be bold, and raise aloft its head;

Behind the dark sees day that smiles,
Even as behind the Holy Rod,
When bare the altar, dim the aisles,
The child of faith beholds his God.

He trusts to Nature's purpose high,
Sure of her laws for here and now.
Who laughs at thy philosophy,
Dear blackbird, is less wise than thou!

THE FLOWER THAT MAKES THE SPRINGTIME

The chestnut trees are soon to flower
  At fair *Saint Jean*, the villa dipped
In sun, before whose viny tower
  Stretch purple mountains silver-tipped.

The little leaves that yesterday
  Pressed in their bodices were seen
Have put their sober garb away,
  And touched the tender twigs with green.

But vainly do the sunbeams fill
  The branches with a flood of light.
The shy bud hesitateth still
  To show the secret thyrse of white.

And yet the rosy peach-tree blooms,
  Like some faint blush of first desire.
The apple waves a wealth of plumes,
  And laughs in all its fresh attire.

To bask amid the buttercups
The timid speedwell ventures out.
Nature calls every earthling up,
And reassures each tiny sprout.

Yet I must off to other sphere!
Then please your poet, chestnuts tall,
Yea, spread ye forth without a fear
Your firework bloom fantastical!

I know your summer splendour's pride.
I've seen you standing sumptuous
In autumn's tunics purple-dyed,
With golden circlets luminous.

In winter white and crystal-crossed
Your delicate boughs I saw again,—
Like lovely traceries the frost
Limns lightly on the window-pane.

Your every garment I have known,
Ye chestnuts grand that loom aloft,—
Save one to me you've never shown,
Of young green fabric first and soft.

Ah, well, good-bye, for I must go!
Keep, then, your flowers, where'er they be.
There is another flower I know,
That makes the springtime fair for me.

Let May with all her blooms arise,
Let May with all her blooms depart!
That flower sufficeth for mine eyes,
And hath pure honey in its heart.

Let be the season where it waits,
And blue or dull be heaven's dome —
It smiles and charms and captivates, —
The precious violet of my home!

A LAST WISH

How long my soul has loved thee, love!
It is full many a year agone.
Thy spring — what charm of flowers thereof,
My winter — what wild snows thereon!

White lilacs from the land of graves
Blow near my temples. Soon enow
Thou 'lt mark the pallid mass that waves
Enshadowing my withered brow.

My westering sun must speedy drop,
And disappear behind the road.
Already on the dim hill-top,
There gleams and waits my last abode.

Then from thy rosy lips let fall
Upon my lips a tardy kiss,
That in my tomb, when comes the call,
My heart may rest, remembering this.

THE DOVE

O TENDER, beauteous dove,
Calling such plaintive things!
Wilt serve unto my love,
And be my love's own wings?

O, but we 're like, poor heart!
Thy dear one, too, is far.
Remembering, apart,
Each weeps beneath the star.

Let not thy rosy feet
Stay once on any tower, —
I am so fain, my sweet, —
So weary turns the hour!

Forswear the palm's repose
That spreadeth over all,
And gables where the snows
Of other pinions fall.

Now fail me not, nor fear!
He dwelleth near the king.
Give him this letter, dear,
These kisses on thy wing.

Then seek again my breast,
This flaming, throbbing goal,
Then come, my dove, and rest —
But bring me back his soul!

A PLEASANT EVENING

What flurrying of rains and snows!
Now every coachman, blue of nose,
In fur and ire
Sits petrified. Oh, it were right
To spend this wild December night
Before one's fire!

The cosy chimney-corner chair
Assumes its most persuasive air.
I seem to see
Its arms held out, its voice to hear,
Beseeching like a mistress dear:
"Ah, stay with me!"

A gauze reveals the orbèd lamp,
Like a fair breast beneath a guimpe,
And drowsily
The shimmer of its light ascends,
Flushing with gold and crimson blends
The ceiling high.

The silence frames no sound of things,
Save for the pendulum that swings
Its golden disk,
And many winds that roam and weep,
Or stealthy to the hall-way sweep,
To dance and frisk.

It 's ball-night at the Embassy.
My coat's limp sleeves are signalling me
To dress anon.
My waistcoat yawns. My shirt obtuse
Seems raising high its wristbands loose,
To be put on.

A narrow boot's abundant glaze
Reflects the ruddy firelight's blaze.
Have I forgot ?
A glove's flat fingers span the shelf.
A thin cravat protrudes itself,
And begs a knot.

Then must I forth ? But what a bore —
To seek the over-crowded door !
To fall in line

Of coaches bearing coats of arms
And haughty beauties with their charms,
Superb and fine!

To stand against a portal wide
And see the surging mass inside
Bear form on form:
Old faces, faces fresh and young,
Black coats low bodices among, —
A motley swarm!

And puffy backs that hide their red
With laces fine of costly thread
Aerial,
Dandies, diplomatists, that press,
With features dull, expressionless,
At fashion's call.

What! Brave, to win a glance of hers,
The rows of lynx-eyed dowagers!
Try undeterred
To speak the dear name of my dear,
And whisper softly in her ear
Love's little word!

Nay, but I 'll not! Her eye shall heed
A letter in the flowers I 'll speed.
No ball-room now!
Let Parma violets make good
Whatever be her passing mood.
They hold my vow.

Ensconced with Heine or with Taine,
Or, if I like, the Goncourts twain,
The time will go.
I 'll dream, until the hour shall stir
Reality, and wait for her.
She 'll come, I know.

ART

More fair the work, more strong,
Stamped in resistance long, —
Enamel, marble, song.

Poet, no shackles bear,
Yet bid thy Muse to wear
The buskin bound with care.

A fashion loose forsake, —
A shoe of sloven make,
That any foot may take.

Sculptor, the clay withstand,
That yieldeth to the hand,
Though listless heart command.

Contend till thou have wrought,
Till the hard stone have caught
The beauty of thy thought.

With Paros match thy might,
And with Carrara bright,
That guard the line of light.

Borrow from Syracuse
The bronze's stubborn use,
Wherein thy form to choose.

And with a delicate grace
In the veined onyx trace
Apollo's perfect face.

Painter, put thou aside
The transient. Be thy pride
The colour furnace-tried.

Limn thou, fantastic, free
Blue sirens of the sea,
And beasts of heraldry.

Before a nimbus gold
Transcendently uphold
The Child, the Cross foretold.

Things perish. Gods have passed.
But song sublimely cast
Shall citadels outlast.

And the forgotten seal
Turned by the plowman's steel
An emperor may reveal.

For Art alone is great:
The bust survives the state,
The crown the potentate.

Carve, burnish, build thy theme, —
But fix thy wavering dream
In the stern rock supreme.

Selected Poems

SELECTED POEMS

THE MIDDLE AGES

WHENEVER I follow my fancy away,
I love near the old Gothic castles to stray,
Where tower the roofs azure-slated and high
And crowned with low shrubs, green against the pale sky.
I love the dear gables, the walls turreted,
The window-panes crossed with their networks of lead, —
The legended olden-time valiant and saint
Under ogival arch wrought with fantasy quaint,
The chapel with pinnacle piercing the air,
Whose bell rings the summons to worship and prayer.
I love the mossed stone where the rain-water files,
The courts where the grasses peep up mid the tiles,
The keep to whose summit the weather-vane clings,
Grazed oft by the stately ciconia's white wings,
The trembling drawbridges of gates blazoned bold
With fabulous monsters and griffins of gold,

The stairways colossal, the halls dim and vast,
The corridors endless that gather the past,
Where faint as faint voices winds whisper and weep,
Where I wander at will, sunk in reveries deep,
And through hours of enchantment and mystery move,—
In the bright Middle Ages of knighthood and love!

THE CAPTIVE BIRD

Long time a prisoner, thou little bird,
These many days naught hast thou seen or heard,
Save inexhaustible, eternal rain, —
Gray threads against a grayer sky's domain, —
And cloud-bathed roofs. Amid the roar and chase
Of Winter dragging Storm about through space,
I know, dear heart, thou darest not to sing.
But let the bright sun of the lovely spring
Touch with its glance the blue-enamelled dome,
Over the silver seas bring swallows home,
Cast o'er the woods its trailing garments long,
And, little bird, thou shalt regain thy song.
But if, to memory bound, thou still regret,
Being unable ever to forget
The hill, the thicket, and the high elm-top,
The country golden with its golden crop,
The brimming river-sweep that wideneth,
Rippled by passing zephyrs sweet of breath,
I shall delight in all thy joys elate.
For linked we are together in one fate.

My soul, like thine, is caged with sufferings,
Against the mortal bars it beats its wings,
And fain would pierce the heaven's azure spell,
Itself an angel, track Ithuriel,
Inebriate with love and light and force,
And so ascend unto the Primal Source.
But ah, what hand shall break the barriers dun,
Or open up the pathway to the sun!

ON A THOUGHT OF WORDSWORTH'S

I 've read no line of Wordsworth whom the steven
  Of Byron hath assailed with bitterest gall,
  Save this I came upon, a fragment small
In a romance pseudonymously given,
From Apuleius filched, "Louisa," — leaven
  Of thought impure and pictures passional.
  How well the flash of beauty I recall,
The "*Spires whose silent finger points to heaven!*"

A white dove's feather down the darkness strayed,
  A lovely flower abloom in some foul nook.
    And now when riming halts and fancy tires,
And Prospero is of Ariel unobeyed,
  I over all the margin of my book
    Trace group on group of heavenward-pointing
      spires.

CARYATIDES

I LOOKED on Michael Angelo's wrought folk,
  Sistine's great frescoes, the Last Judgment saw,—
Speechless, the while the wonder in me woke.
  And as I looked my spirit bowed with awe.

A mass of shapes of every attitude,
  Lion-like faces, necks of oxen strength,
Flesh firm as marble, muscles taut and rude,
  With force to break a cable's iron length!

No stony arch upon their forms was set;
  But all their sinews to some task were steeled.
Meseemed their tensioned arms were dripping sweat.
  What, then, the invisible load their power revealed?

They bore a weight to weary Hercules,
  The weight, O master, of thy mighty thought!
And never noble Caryatides
  Their shoulders to more massive burden brought!

THE CHIMERA

A YOUNG chimera at my goblet's brim
Gave sweetest kiss amid the orgy's spell.
Emerald her eyes, and to her haunches slim
The golden torrent of her tresses fell.

Her shoulders fluttering pinions did bedeck.
I sprang upon her back, for travel fain,
And toward me bending firm her lovely neck,
I plunged my tightening fingers in her mane.

She struggled madly; but I clung, austere,
With iron knees I crushed her flanks to me.
Then softly came her voice, and silver-clear:
"Whither, then, master, shall I carry thee?"

To farthest edge of all eternal things,
Beyond the sun, beyond the bounds of space.
But weary ere the end shall be thy wings, —
For I would see my vision face to face!

THE ENCOUNTER

YESTER morning it was I beheld as I dreamed
On the arch of a bridge an encounter of horse.
Cuirassed and caparisoned, truly it seemed
The charging of splendid and passionate force.

Fierce dragons crouched low on the helmets of light,
And haggard-eyed, brazen Medusas peered out
From the bucklers. The imbricate brassarts were bright
With knotted wild serpents which girt them about.

Oft from the gigantical arch's tall brim
A knight, losing balance, a mad frighted steed,
Reeled down to the depth of the water whose grim,
Cruel jaws waited wide in their crocodile greed.

It was you, O my thoughts, my desires! battling well —
Hard-pressing, down-beating, the bridgeway to keep.
And your mutilate bodies that hurtled and fell,
Engulfed in the wave, are forever asleep.

VERSAILLES

To be a city's ghost, Versailles, thy fate!
  Like Venus in her Adriatic, how
  Thy paralytic form doth trembling bow
Under a carven mantle's sumptuous weight!
Ah, what impoverishment, what fallen state, —
  Olden, yet not antique! No vine hast thou,
  About thy portico upspringing now
To veil thy nudeness wan and unelate.

And like a sorrowful, forsaken one,
  Thou waitest for thy royal paramour,
    Dreaming his bright return the livelong hours.
Beneath his tomb the Rival of the Sun
  Now slumbers. Mute thy garden streams endure,
    And but a statue people fills thy bowers.

BARCAROLLE

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

Oars of ivory are gleaming,
Silken banners are streaming,
Golden-bright is the prow.
I 've a page fair and minion,
For a sail a saint's pinion,
And for ballast a bough.

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

Tell me, what is thy pleasure,
A wide ocean to measure?
A far island to claim?
Wreaths of snow-flowers to fashion,
Or to linger with passion
Near the flower of the flame?

BARCAROLLE

Tell me, beautiful maiden,
Whither wouldst thou away,
To what shore blossom-laden,
Through the wind and the spray?

"To the land ever vernal,
Where love liveth eternal,
Ah, take me!" she sighs.
Sweet, this land of thy seeing
Hath no place and no being,
Under any love skies!

THE PORTAL

O ARTIST, man, whoever thou mayst be,
Marvel not through so sad a gate to see
This new-born volume fatally unfold!

Alas! all monument built high, complete,
Before it raise its head must plunge its feet:
The skyward tower hath felt the secret mould.

Below, the night-bird and the tomb. Above,
Rose of the sun and whiteness of the dove,
Carols and bells on every arch of gold.

Above, the minarets, the window's charm,
Where birdlings fret their wings in sunbeams warm —
The carved escutcheons borne by angels tall,

Acanthus leaves and lotus flowers of stone,
Like lilies in Elysian gardens blown.
Below, rude shaft and vault elliptical,

Knights rigid on their biers the deathlong days,
With folded hands and helpless upward gaze,
And oozing drips from cavern roofs that fall.

My book is builded thus, with narrow line
Of stratum stone, embossed with many a sign,
And carven words the creeping mosses fill.

God grant that, passing o'er this humble place,
The pilgrim foot shall never quite efface
Its poor inscription and its work's unskill.

My ghostly dead! That ye might walk the shades,
With patience have I wrought your colonnades,
And in my Campo-Santo couched you still.

There watcheth at your side an angel true,
To make a curtain of his wing for you,
Pillow of marble, cloth of leaden fold.

Yea, Righteousness and Peace have kissed in stone,
Mercy and Truth are met together, one
In flowing raiment, fair and aureoled.

A sculptured greyhound lieth at your heels.
A beauteous child eternally appeals
From out the shadow of the tomb enscrolled.

Upon the pillars arabesques arise
Of blooming vines that flutter circlewise,
As o'er espalier twines the dappled green.

And the dark tomb appears a gladsome thing,
With all this bright, perpetual flowering,
And looks on sorrow with a smile serene.

Death plays coquette. Only her forehead fair
Hath pallor still beneath her ebon hair.
She seeks to charm, and hath a royal mien.

A burst of colour fires the blazons clear;
The alabaster melts to whitest tear;
Less hard uplooms the bronze-built sepulture.

The consorts lie upon their beds of state;
Their pillows seem to soften with their weight,
Their love to flower within the marble pure;

Till with her garlands, traceries, and festoons,
Trefoils, pendentives, pillars wrought with runes,
Fantasia at her will may laugh and lure.

The tomb becomes a thing of bright parade,
A throne, a holy altar, an estrade,
For it is wish fulfilled of sight at last.

But if, by some capricious thought impelled,
Your hand should peradventure wonder-spelled
Upraise a cover rich with carven cast,

Under the heavy vault and architrave,
You still would find within the mouldering grave,
The stiff and white cadaver sheeted fast,

With never glimmer of a ray without,
Nor inner light to flood the bier about,
As in the pictures of the Holy Tomb.

Between her thin arms, like a tender spouse
Death binds her chosen to her, nor shall rouse
Them ever, nor let go her grasp of doom.

Scarce at the Judgment Hour their heads shall stir,
When at the trumpet blast the stars shall err,
And a strange wind blow out the torch's plume.

An angel shall discern them in his quest,
Upon the ruins of the world at rest,
For they shall sleep and sleep, the cycles long.

And if the Christ Himself should raise His hand,
As unto Lazarus, to bid them stand,
The grave would loosen not its fetter strong.

A tomb enwrought with sculpture is my verse,
That hides a body under leaf and thyrse,
And breaks its weeping heart to seem a song.

My poems are graves of mine illusions dead,
Where many a wild and luckless form I bed
When a ship founders in the tempest's peal! —

Abortive dream, ambition's eagerness,
All secret ardours, passions issueless, —
All bitter, intimate things that life can feel.

Each day the sea devours a goodly ship.
Close to the shore there hides a reef to rip
Her copper-sheathèd flanks and iron keel.

THE PORTAL

How many have I launched, with what fair names!
With silken streamers coloured like the flames, —
Never to cleave the harbour sun's reflex!

Ah, what dear passengers, what faces sweet, —
Desires with heaving breasts, hopes, visions fleet, —
O my heart's children swarming to the decks!

The sea hath shrouded them with glaucous taint:
The red of rose, the alabaster faint,
The star, the flower, lie floating in the wrecks.

Fearful and masterful, the hurtling tide
Dashes from drifting spar to dolphin side
My stark and drownèd dreams that sink and part.

For these inglorious travellers distant-bound,
Pale seekers of Americas unfound,
Curve into hollow caverns, O mine Art!

Then rise in towers and cupolas of fire,
Press upward in a bold cathedral spire,
And fix your peak in heaven's open heart!

Ye little birds of love and fantasy,
Sonnets, white doves of heaven's poetry,
  Light softly on my gables argentine.

And swallows, April messengers that pass,
Beat not your tender wings against the glass, —
  My marbles have their rifts where you may win.

My virgin saint shall hide you in her robe,
For you the emperor shall let fall his globe,
  The lotus heart spread wide to nest you in.

I've reared mine azure arch, mine organ grand,
I've carved my pillars, placed with loving hand
  In each recess a saint of martydom;

I've begged a chalice of Elygius, — spice
And frankincense for holy sacrifice
  Of Kaspar, and have drawn the sweet therefrom.

The people kneel at prayer. The radiant priest
In orphreyed chasuble prepares the Feast.
  The church is builded, Lord! Then wilt Thou come?

THE ESCORIAL

Set in defiance by a mountain crest,
There rises far across the country's breast
The great Escorial towered and tenebrous,
Upon its shoulder bearing in the gloam,
Like a huge elephant, a massive dome,
The granite whim of Spain's Tiberius.

Never did Pharaoh where the sad cliffs loom
Make for his mummy any darker tomb;
Never had Sphinx more dulness in the vast,
Long desert where no thing of life resorts.
The mould o'ercovers the forsaken courts.
Priests, friars, and flatterers have wrought and passed.

And all were dead, if from the hands of kings
Ensculptured, and from nooks and panellings
There fluttered not a swarm of swallows free,
Playfully winging in a wild carouse,
To flick and tease and waken from its drowse
The giant form that dreams eternity.

A KING'S SOLITUDE

Encloistered I live in a tenebrous place
At the depth of my soul, with no love and no friend,
Alone like a god, with no equal to face,
Save mine ancestors sleeping their sleep without end.
For grandeur is solitude! All the long day
A changeless, an indolent idol I stand;
Superhuman and cold in my castle I stay,
The purple upon me, the world in my hand.

Crown of thorns like to Christ's they have set on my hair.
Under weight of my terrible splendour I bow,
And the sharp, golden rays of the nimbus I wear;
Bright drops of blood-royal I bear on my brow.
Heraldical vultures come tearing my side.
Prometheus chained to his mountain and cast
To the tempest of heaven, the wrath of the tide,
Was only a king to his glory made fast.

Throned high on my mystic Olympus, I note
But the voices of flatterers flocking in line, —
Sole cadences counted as worthy to float
Unto summit so lofty, so distant, as mine.

A KING'S SOLITUDE

If wild with oppression my people upswarm,
And rattle their irons and moan in their fear, —
"Sleep, Sire," they tell me, "it is but the storm.
The thunder shall slacken, the sky shall be clear."

I 've power for all things, and pleasure for none.
Ah, would I might know one deep wish in my heart,
Feel life in its warmth flood my bosom of stone,
Share one true delight, in one feast have a part!
But lonely the sun in its circle must go.
High peaks are the coldest, and never a spring,
And never a summer can soften the snow
On height of Sierra, in heart of a king!

THE LAUREL IN THE GENERALIFE GARDEN

In the Generalife a lovely laurel,
Gay as victory and glad as love,
Bathes its boughs in fountain mists auroral,
Hides a pearl within each bloom of coral.
And the green earth smiles to heaven above.

Like a blushing girl elate and slender,
Tint of flesh it taketh with the spring;
Like an odalisk in her nude splendour,
Waiting by the water, flushed and tender,
Ready for her fair apparelling.

Beauteous laurel! Many a mystic hour
Have I rested me beside its form,
Sealed my lips upon its precious flower —
Sweet red mouth! — and, thrilling to its power,
Felt it give me back my kisses warm.

FAREWELL TO POETRY

Come, fallen angel, fold thy wings of rose,
Doff thy white garment and thy golden ray!
Piercing the ambient ether of thy way,
A star, thou couldst but hurtling fall to prose.
Upon the ground thy dove-like feet unclose —
Walk — for thy soaring-time is not to-day.
Within thy bosom bid thy treasure stay,
And let thy lyre a moment now repose.

O thou poor child of heaven, thy song was vain!
Earth's ears were deaf to thy most subtle chord,
Nor could it guess the language of thy spell.
But ere thou leave me, O fair angel mine,
Go seek me out my pale sweet love adored,
And on her lips imprint a long farewell!

THE TULIP

I AM the tulip, Holland's choicest flower.
The thrifty Fleming — such my loveliness —
Pays for my perfect bulb a price no less
Than diamond. Lordly lineage is my dower.
Like to a proud Yolande in her young hour
Of pomp and kirtle bright, upon my dress
Of dewy crimson crossed with silver fess,
I bear the painted blazon of my power.

The gardener divine with fingers deft
Spun golden beams of iridescent noon,
And liquid depths of purple fashioned up,
To make for me a robe of royal weft.
Peerless I stand — yet grieve that Nature boon
Poured never perfume in my shining cup!

TOUCH NOT THE MARBLE

Yea, one may love a statue, so it be
  Some subtle dream of Phidias. Tall and still,
  From her bright self to man there may distil
An intimacy — for he comes, and she,
The goddess waits his coming secretly.
  And he forgetteth that her form is chill,
  That her white glances fascinate and kill,
Bound fast before her fair divinity.

She seems to smile, and he, grown bolder, cries:
  "Immortal one, a woman, then, art thou?"
    A fiery touch is on the marble wan;
Straightway it trembles; thunder shakes the skies, —
  Well knoweth all-indulgent Venus how
    A god's desire may flame the heart of man!

ALBERTUS

or THE SOUL AND SIN

A Theological Legend

THE COMEDY OF DEATH

Translated into English Prose

By F. C. de SUMICHRAST

Albertus, or The Soul and Sin

A Theological Legend

ALBERTUS

or THE SOUL AND SIN

A Theological Legend

POEM

You shall see anon; 't is a knavish piece of work.

Hamlet, iii, 2.

I

By the side of a deep canal whose greenish, silent tide with water-lilies and boats is covered, rises, with pointed gables, granaries vast, slate-roofed towers on which storks their nests do build, and noisy pot-houses with topers filled, an old Flemish town such as Teniers loves to paint. Surely the place you know? — Look, there stands the willow, its dull green leaves on its shoulders spreading, as spreads the hair of a girl as she bathes; there the church and its steeple too; the pond, where bravely duck armadas do disport. In truth, all the picture lacks is a frame and nail wherefrom to hang it on the wall.

II

Comfort and far niente! A world of poetic calm and satisfaction that wellnigh might the fancy excite thither to go and Flemish turn; to own a well-coloured pipe, and a stoup with painted flowers adorned, a tankard huge enough four pints to hold, such as Brawer's topers grasp. And at night, close by the stove with hissing, crackling logs, amid a cloud of tobacco smoke, hands on stomach folded, vague thoughts idly to pursue, to doze or digest, to sing some old refrain, to drink a health, within one of those warm interiors which Ostade knows so well how to light up with soft luminousness.

III

So that even you, poet and painter, would come to forget that fairy land of which Goethe's Mignon, of cold abhorrent, remembering, oft to her Wilhelm speaks, — the land of sunshine where the citron ripens, where the jessamine ever freshly blows; to make you forget Naples for Amsterdam's sake, Claude Lorrain for Berghem; to make you willing to exchange, for these mossy-green walls between which Rembrandt,

within the dun darkness, brings gleaming forth Faust in dress of olden days, the fair marble palaces with their white colonnades, the dark-hued women, the langourous serenades, and all the azure Venetian air!

IV

Of yore within this town, so tradition tells, there dwelt a woman wicked, Veronica by name. Feared she was by one and all, and it was whispered low that round her home had murmurs strange been heard arise, and that angels of evil there in darksome night their pleasure took. — The sounds were nameless sounds, till then unheard by human ears, like unto the voice of dead within the tomb, by magic spell from sleep awaked; faint plaints from underground arising; distant rumours, songs, cries, tears, the clank of chains, and terrifying howls.

V

One stormy day, indeed, had dame Gertrude with her own eyes seen emerge from out a cloud a black fiend on lightning-bolt astride, who shot across the blood-red sky, and within the chimney, whence sudden rose vapours bluish, dash down head first with hideous

yell. The barn of Justus van Eyck, the farmer, broke into flames, that none might quench, and in its fall, an avalanche of fire, crushed to death four of the workers. And people worthy of belief do declare that Veronica stood there, laughing sardonic laughter and muttering sarcastic words.

VI

The wife of Cornelius, the brewer, before her time did bring into the world a child all covered o'er with loathsome hair, and of ugliness such that gladly would the father have seen it dead. 'T was said that on the woman brought to bed, and since that day sick continuously and in her bed lying, Veronica, by some foul, mysterious means, had cast an evil spell. — And truth to tell, her grim and treacherous mien more than justified these reports. Her eyes were green, her mouth a cave, black her teeth, wrinkled her brow, her fingers knotty, bowed her back, her foot misshapen and her legs yet worse, harsh her voice, and her soul more repulsive even than her frame. The Devil himself more hideous could not be.

VII

This ancient witch did a hut inhabit that crouched at the foot of a barren mound, exposed, in summer's heat as in winter's cold, to the four winds of heaven. The long-prickled thistle, the nettle and ivy spread around in mass irregular; upon it the grass luxuriant its swaying plumes did hang, while through cracks in roof and rifts in ceiling the rain, by obstacles unhindered, with its great drops the mouldy, rotten floors did flood. Within the window frame scarce one pane out of three might one note that unbroke was, and never could the door fast be closed.

VIII

Slimy slugs silver-traced the walls, the stones of which were cracked; the plaster kept breaking away. Lizards green and gray within the holes did lodge, and when night fell a high, piercing note was heard, that of the leaping frog, while the dun-eyed toads did hoarsely groan. — Thus it was that, on winter nights, once the dark had fallen, and especially when a fleecy cloud shrouded the horn of the crescent moon in mass of vapour, no one — not even Eisenbach the preacher

himself — dared to pass in front of the sinister den without shudder and pallor of fear.

IX

The interior worthy was of the exterior alluring: it was a pandemonium, wherein on one and the same row were jumbled together innumerable fantastic articles. There were lean bats with wings diaphanous, clinging to the walls with their four slight claws; broken-necked bottles, cracked earthen dishes, crocodiles, serpents stuffed, rare plants, alembics, twisted into shapes of the strangest, old manuscripts open lying upon limping chairs, ill-preserved fœti offending the nose from a mile away; their yellow, blue faces plastered against the glass of the jar.

X

It was a downright witches' sabbath of colours and forms, amid which the paunchy jar, with its huge sides, loomed like a river-horse, and the long-necked vial seemed to be an Egyptian ibis perched upon the edge of the sarcophagus of some Pharaoh or long-dead Magi king. It was a vision like unto a madman's dreams, or wrought in brain by opium, in which re-

ceivers, matrasses, syphons, and pumps, long-drawn like a phallus or twisted like trumps, assumed the appearance of elephant and rhinoceros; in which the monsters traced around the zodiac, bearing on their brows their name in Syrian, together boleros danced.

XI

A dusty heaping up of apparatus strange, of which the eye the baffling contours could trace, and of old volumes, with not one title in the Christian tongues. A medley, a chaos in which everything grimaced, was deformed, twisted, changed its shape; a mirror reversed, in which nought could be known, for all was transposed — red turned dun, white black became, and black to blue did turn. Never under an alcove did Smarra more hideous phantoms crowd: it was the realising of fantastic tales, the living embodiment of visions queer, Hoffmann at once and Rabelais.

XII

To make the picture complete, from the edge of shelves there grinned whitened skulls, with polished crowns, long teeth, triangular noses, and empty sockets which seemed to glare with hungry look. A skeleton

upright, its arms hanging limp, cast, as willed the light that streamed through the network of its ribs — scarce deserted by the inhabitants of the grave — its shadow in straight lines upon the wall. Had Satan's self entered there, heretic though he be, such ice-cold terror upon him would have fallen that, like a good Catholic, he 'd have crossed himself.

XIII

Yet to an artist a hell like this is a paradise. 'T was thence Teniers his "Alchemist" drew, and Callot many a motive for his "Temptation." 'T was thence Goethe got all that scene in which Mephistopheles leads Faust, eager his youth to renew, to the witch's den the potion to swallow. The illustrious baronet, Sir Walter Scott himself (Jedediah Cleishbotham), found in it more than one theme. The character he repeats constantly, Meg, in "Guy Mannering," is as like as two peas to our Veronica. All he did was to take her and to conceal her dress.

XIV

The chequered tartan plaid and the bonnet hide the skirt and the coif. Scotland has taken the place of

Flanders — that is all. Then he has stolen from me, the infamous plagiarist, this description (compare "The Antiquary"), the black cat — Marius on the ruins standing! — and many another touch. And I would almost swear that he who to the sublime the grotesque did wed, who created Bug, Han, Cromwell, Notre-Dame, Hernani, within this very hovel those masks did mould that, when one looks at their features fantastic, seem to have been done by Benvenuto Cellini.

XV

The cat, of which I have spoken in the preceding stanza, was the great grandsire of Mürr, the philosopher, whose story, intertwined with that of Kreissler, more than once has made me forget that the logs were putting on, as the fire died down, their robe of plush, that midnight was striking, and that it was winter time. My poor Childebrand, truest of friends, of cats the most tender-hearted, and endowed with the whitest soul that could be found under fur so black, that friend of mine whose death I so sorely mourned that since that day I have life hated, one of his heirs also was.

XVI

For the matter of that, this worthy cat was the one and only creature allowed within the den; the sole and only one for whom Veronica felt any love. And it may be that he alone in all the world her did love; for, indeed, old, ugly, and poor as she was, who else would have done so? Those we hate are wicked — that is excuse enough for us. — It is night; all is silence; a red light flickers and gleams on the hovel's pane. The cat, curled up on the broken-legged chair, watches with serious, intelligent gaze, the old woman who moves about and hastes to prepare some shameful mystery.

XVII

Or else, on his whiskers stiff his paw rubbing, smooths his coat, lustrous as ermine's, with the help of his rough, harsh tongue, and feeling chilly, between the andirons, close to the logs, his head under his tail, artistically himself curls up. — Meanwhile the wind without still moans, and with the strident sounds of the storm the orfrey mingles its screams. The roof creaks and groans; the logs crackle sharp; the flames swirl on high, and within the great caldron, under a

foam of flakes, dark, stinking water bubbles and boils, its sound accompanying the kettle and the feline's purr.

XVIII

Midnight is the hour appointed for the evil deed. Midnight now sounds. — Forthwith the infamous Veronica a circle on the floor draws with her wand, and in the centre stands. Outside the magic ring, phantoms innumerable, luminous dots against the hangings dark, tremble, like motes a sunbeam in the shadow reveals. — Meanwhile the hag her incantation mutters, utters fierce cries, speaks words the sound of which pains the ear as sledge-hammers wielded in a forge, and which scrape the throat like potions evil.

XIX

But this is not enough. To fulfil the mystery, she one by one her garments to the ground doth cast, and naked stands. A terrifying sight! A whitened skeleton swaying in the wind, and which has grinned for six months from the gibbet at the crows, is a cheerful spectacle by comparison with this carcass with its flaccid breasts, its yellow, sunken belly, wrinkled with large folds, its arms red as lobsters. "Horror! hor-

ror! horror!" as Shakespeare would say; a nameless thing, impossible to describe; the very ideal of nightmare grim.

XX

Within her palm the water dark she takes and thrice her bosom with it she doth anoint. Now, no human tongue can truly tell what then befell! — The flaccid breasts, that hung as hangs the skirt of well-worn coat, miraculously swell and round become; the cloud of tan is cleared away, and they might be an opal globe parted in twain, so fair the form and fair the tint. The blood courses in them in azure veins, life gleams in them so that even a maid of fifteen could scarce more blooming be.

XXI

Her eyes she rubs, her whole face next. Roses bloom once more; smallest wrinkles go, as vanish ripples when the breeze doth fail; her mouth with enamels gleams, and brilliant light, a fiery diamond, within her eyes doth flash; her hair is jet, her frame no longer bowed — she is beauteous now; so fair that she would envy excite. Many a gallant swain his life would peril merely to touch her fingers' tips, and no

one would dream, on seeing the lovely head, the body fair, the figure sweet, to what she owes them.

XXII

A very pearl of love! Great eyes, almond-shaped, at times most German in their sweetness tender, at times flaming with Spanish heat; two glorious mirrors of jet that make one wish to gaze within them one's whole life long. Her voice's tone more sweet than nightingale's lay; Sontag and Malibran, whose every note doth thrill and in the heart awake a secret note; Puck's roguishness, Ariel's grace, a winsome mouth whereon the smile mingles with Esmeralda's pout and mingling plays — a miracle, a dream of Heaven!

XXIII

Reader, hyperbole apart, she was truly beautiful — most beautiful! That is, she seemed so, and that the same thing is. Enough that the eye be deceived; it ever is by love; happiness due to fancy is the same as if mathematics proved it true. For what is happiness, if not to believe in and caress one's dream, with prayer to God that here below it may never wane? For faith alone heaven to us shows in our terrestrial

exile, and this desert of the world, in which felicity on nothingness is based as on reality is woe.

XXIV

The lambent flame upsprings once more. Forth from the circle Veronica steps, a tunic white slips on, and over that a purple robe. Upon her head, in place of the black cap she wore erstwhile, an ermine hood she sets, and a mirror in her hand taking, looks long within and with pleasure smiles at the sight she sees. The moon just then, through a break in the clouds, upon her cast her fond, chaste light. The door open stood, so that one might from without look straight within; and, haply, had any at this time strayed along the road, he would have made sure he dreamed awake.

XXV

Veronica, with the tip of her wand, touches the cat, which gazes upon her with bright, treacherous glance, and rolls at her feet, its back curling. Thrice she spins around, makes mystic signs, and whispers low, cabalistic words. Then is seen a sight that makes the blood run cold. In place of the cat, appears a hand-

some youth, — aquiline nose, forehead high, black moustache, — a youth such as maidens see in their dreams of love. His mantle is red and his doublet of silk, his Toledo blade has a sparkling hilt, — he undoubtedly is a sprightly lad.

XXVI

"'T is well," said Veronica, holding out her white hand to the young cavalier, who, hand on hip, in silence waited. "Escort me, Don Juan." — Juan bowed. — "Whither may I take you, madame?" — The lady bowed and whispered in his ear a syllable or two. Don Juan understood. — "Here, Leporello," said he in a loud, ringing voice. "Her ladyship goes forth. Take a torch and light her on her way." — Instantly, torch in hand, Leporello appears. — "Bring up the carriage." — They enter it, the whip cracks, the coachman swears, and they 're off.

XXVII

Off, but which way? That is a profound mystery. It was pitch-dark, and besides, in so dark a place who the devil could have seen them? No one, for all were asleep. The moon had bound a cloud across its eyes of blue lest they indiscreet should prove. So the

carriage reached the end of its way without any one suspecting whom it contained. Not a single splash of mud defaced the panels broad and blazoned; the wheels, as if the stones had been covered with velvet and with silk, rolled on, silent, noiseless, through the fields straight on, and so lightly that they made no mark, that they nowhere the wheat bowed down.

XXVIII

For the nonce, the scene to Leyden is shifted. That petticoated monkey, that hag, hideous enough to make Beelzebub himself turn on his heel, now young and beautiful, incarnate poetry, treasure of graces, makes the fashionable beauties and middle-class Venuses of the place with jealousy wither, under their ample skirts, overladen with galloons, and their lofty caps, full six feet high. Empty are the rooms of Lady Barbara Von Altenhorff; empty are the halls of the young Countess Cecilia Wilmot; there is no sign of a crush at the Landgravine of Gotha's.

XXIX

Young and old, lawyers in dusty wigs, dandies shedding around them the scent of amber, officers in gay

uniforms dragging their swords across the sounding floors, painters and musicians, all crowd to the stranger's rooms; and, although it was far from proper, as vinegary ancient prudes remark, thus to keep all men to one's self, especially when one had no other attraction than a piquant face and the beauty of youth, none the less men kept running there. The sole topic of talk in town was Veronica. Never was any name more frequently spoken.

XXX

When she appeared it was impossible to hear one's self for the enthusiasm, the delirium, the excitement, expressing itself in peals of applause and bravos and noise. Never did dilettanti from their theatre-boxes rain down more abundant praise, flowers, and verse on a prima donna than at every step fair Veronica at the dance, at the play, everywhere, received from her adoring admirers. The poets wrote sonnets to her eyes and called her "Sun" or "Moon" in acrostics; painters painted her face, and the rich ruined themselves in their rivalry.

XXXI

She gave the tone, the keynote of fashion. She was adored like an idol. In naught would any have dared

her to contradict. The shape of bonnets and the form of sleeves; which was better, flowers or feathers white; which the right jewels, which the most becoming, especially the important matter whether one should rouge or not, — she it was who decided all. The lady of the Margrave Tielemann Van Horn and the old Duke's daughter in vain protested by their heretical dress; scarce was there to be seen within their old-fashioned rooms a broken-down admirer ancient.

XXXII

Young would have become cheerful. Heraclites the weeper, wiping his eyes, would have laughed louder than Democritus at the comical sight of the efforts made by the ladies of the place, short and stout Irises, to dress as she did and to copy her grace. Maidens, the slimmest of whom weighed three or four hundred, — rubicund faces, with flowers, lots of ribbons and laces, masses of flesh (after Rubens' manner), — wearing instead of rich velvet and great pattern brocades, thin tissues, gauze, fleece-like stuff. Ye gods, what a masquerade!

XXXIII

But as for our heroine, she was invariably charming, whether adorned or not; whether veiled or cloaked; whether cape wearing or a hood. In short, in every way everything she had seemed endowed with life. The folds appeared to understand when they ought to flutter and when they ought to hang; the intelligent silk hushed its chatter or kept it up to warble her praise; the breeze blew just on purpose to make her fringes shimmer, and her feathers fluttered like birds about to take to flight, while an invisible hand her laces separated and played within their maze.

XXXIV

Her hair was always well dressed. Whatever she wore, — a mere trifle, the first thing she took, every bit of ribbon, every flower, — fairylike seemed to be; whatever touched her at once precious became; everything was in perfect taste and indicated quality. Whatever her dress, grand, rich, or quaint, she alone was noticed. Her eyes made the flash of diamond's self grow pale; her teeth were fairer than pearls, and satin lost its gloss when near her skin. With her port

so free, her teasing wit, her charm both coy and arch, she was in turns Camargo, Manon Lescaut, Philine, — in short, a ravishing wretch!

XXXV

Hans, Aulic counsellor, and Master Philip for her sake their gin, their pipe renounced. It was positively jolly to see these worthy Flemings, so perfect of their kind, stout, squat, their faces beaming, actually forgetful of their tulips, blooming at last, transform themselves into dandies and posture round the diva. Wives and mothers certes did not spare her bitter remarks, but serenely she kept on her way, none of her adorers losing, and, caring little for the empty talk, welcomed every one, and accepted the homage and the cash of each.

XXXVI

Two months have passed. On this day, like a queen, Veronica a headache boasts or pretends to have. Her door is closed. Her courtiers in numbers great are vainly waiting. Within a rich boudoir in which amber pastiles sweet perfume shed, and where every footfall upon the handsome Turkish rugs is noiseless as on sward, in which a silver lamp and the

hissing logs alone break silence with their shrill sound, our beauty in her morning wrapper, pale and white as pearl, bends over a table, a paper crushing within her hand.

XXXVII

She sulks. Ye gods, how bewitching is a woman when she sulks! Her hand under her chin, her elbow softly pressing one knee like the jasper rich, her body willowy bending, like a buttercup with a drop of dew o'er full. Her hair undone, that in a moment shows, or hides, perchance, as the zephyr through it blows, or the restless fingers through it move, the cheek, pearl-pink, transparent, the brow azure-veined; just as in great gardens the limbs of trees with their foliage veil or uncover the statues fair that stand under their summer shade.

XXXVIII

Whence, then, her grief? When she rose this morn and in her glass did look did she herself discover older or less fair to be? Did she find within her jet black hair one single pale silvery thread, or on her dazzling teeth a single stain? Did the two ends of the ribbon, when her hands drew them, prove too short for the

stouter frame? Has a dress she expected and on which she reckoned to take away the Count from Lady Wilmot,— has that dress been torn or crushed on its way? Is it her dog that has sickened? Or, after three nights at the dance, has fever paled the pure carmine of her lovely lips?

XXXIX

Is her glance less bright, her neck less fair, the form of her Greek face less pure? Has some rival, in greater youth or diamonds richer rejoicing, turned more heads at the last assembly? Nay, still, as ever, the queen of the feast she is. All at her knees do fall. But yesterday one of her lovers, filled with empty despair on finding her unfaithful, within the Rhine himself did headlong cast. This very morn for her sake did Ludwig Von Siegendorff a duel fight; his adversary 's dead; himself is wounded. Surely this is a great success; all Leyden is talking about it now. Why, then, her gloomy brow?

XL

Why do her brows tremble and bend? Why do her long, black lashes, as, half closed, between them

tears now slip, flutter and cast upon the satiny skin a brown aureole, a velvety shade such as Lawrence paints? Why do her troubled breasts within their gauze press and under the thin nets rise and fall, like snow when blows the storm? What strange thought imparts so dreamy an air to her lightsome face? Is it the remembrance of her first love and the voice of infancy? Is it regret that she has lost her fair innocence, or of the future is it dread?

XLI

Nay, it is not that. Too thoroughly corrupt is she not to forget, and broken is the chain that her past to her present linked. Besides, I do not believe there be in any recess of her soul a single one of those remembrances which in every woman's heart, howe'er depraved she may be, are left of better days, and remain spotless within the memory's depths like pearls within the waters black. She is but a coquette, she has never loved. A ball, a supper, a party, an entertainment to be given, pleasure, — these are the things that take her out of herself and prevent her hearing the voice of her oppressed heart.

XLII

Here is the trouble. The night before at the play was given Mozart's "Don Juan." Surrounded by her lightsome crowd of dandies young, — drawing-room butterflies whose wings by some Leyden tailor have been made, — Veronica was present, the cynosure of all eyes, coquetting within her box and radiant to behold. All women else under their rouge with rage turned pale, their lips did bite, but she, sure to please, like a peacock its tail spreading, her fan opened out, chatted, laughed aloud, let fall her glass, her glove took off, her scent bottle passed, or made its rich enamel flash and gleam.

XLIII

In vain the actors wrought with might and main, spun out their finest notes. They made no gain. Leporello step by step behind Don Juan walked in vain; in vain the Commander thundered with his boots, Zerlina warbled playing with the notes, and Donna Anna wept. They might have kept it up for a livelong year without any taking note. The stalls were inattentive. They talked, they looked, but looked another way. Through the gold-mounted glasses all

desires in the same direction turned. Veronica smiled. The joy of being beautiful made her ten times more beauteous yet.

XLIV

Alone a man, by a pillar standing, undisturbed, unamazed by the sensation great, from the forgotten stage his glance never taking, in a secret ecstasy deeply drank those wondrous chords, those glorious harmonies, which make thy name, O Mozart, shine over all! Thy genius his had seized and on its wings borne it to the eternal spheres. Of time, or place, or world, he unconscious was. Into music he was turned and his heart as it beat, fluttered and sang with purest voice, for he alone thy meaning caught.

XLV

At most, between the acts, upon the fair he coldly glanced; his eye flashed not, as if the look had struck against a wall. — Yet, like a bullet, swift-sped, that glance across the house to Veronica's heart shot true, and unconscious all, a grievous wound on her inflicted — a deadly wound. So falls the brave, by bosky corner slain, all gloryless, laid low by shot perchance at

some hare aimed; or killed by falling slate, or taken off by fever, as he to his home returns.

XLVI

She who, till then, like the salamander cold amid the flames, scarce deigned to give a passing caprice in return for passion, and made it her delight — for such is woman's pleasure, — hearts to torture and souls to damn; she who pitiless trifled with love as a cruel child with its plaything trifles, forgetting it and far away casting it so soon as it wearies, — she now was suffering the pains that yesterday she caused. She made men love her, and now she loved, and she who captured at last in her snare was caught. Her haughty heart at last was bowed.

XLVII

That is just the way of life, of fate. When on the fatal dial strikes the hour, none may his end for a day put off. No matter how virtuous, whether one flee or stay, all must yield to that power, infernal or celestial. Two things unavoidable are, — one's fate and love. Love, the joy and scourge of earth! sweet pain; sorrow one regrets, and so full of charms.

Laughter and tears; pallid, lovely care; ill, that all seek! A paradise, a hell; a dream, in heaven begun, on earth prolonged; an enchantment mysterious!

XLVIII

Oh, voluptuousness intense! Pleasure which, may-hap, of man God's equal makes! Who would not know you, if yet unknown, moments delicious and yet so short, that are a whole life worth, and which the angel that envies them would gladly pay for with an eternity of happiness in heaven. Oh, sea of felicity, ravishment, ecstasy, of which no words on earth can convey the bliss, whether in prose or eke in verse! Oh, hours of trysting! Oh, ye glorious sleepless nights, delirious sobs intoxicate! Sighs, strange words, lost in a caress! Kisses mad and wild desires!

XLIX

Love, thou art the only sin worth while incurring hell for! In vain in his sermons the priest condemns thee. In vain within her arm-chair, spectacles on nose, the mother to her daughter as a monster paints thee. In vain does jealous Orgon his door close and to his windows bars doth place. In vain, in still-

born tomes, do moralists endlessly cry out against thee. In vain coquettes thy power flout. When thou art named, the novice herself doth cross. Young or old, handsome or ugly, rosy-faced or pale, English or French, pagan or Christian, every one loves at least once in life.

L

As for me, 'twas last year the frenzy of love fell upon me. Good-bye then to poetry. I 'd not time enough to use it to compass words. Four months and a half not another thing I did save worship my idol, adore her, wonder at her glorious hair, ebony waves in which my hands loved to lose themselves; listen to her breathing, watch her live, and smile when she smiled to me, drink deeper intoxication from the sight; read her nascent desires within her eyes, on her sleeping face note her dreams, and from her rosy lips sip her breath within a kiss.

LI

But for that the world would have had this poem in eighteen nine and twenty; nay, earlier yet; but, as I have said, I had not leisure to string words upon a verse like pearls upon a string. With her I was

wont to go into the great, deep woods to hear the thrushes sing, — for the time was spring. She, like a child, scampered through the dew in quest of butterflies; her ankles wet with silvery shower, she went singing on, as under her footsteps every flower its calyx gently bowed, and I upon her gazed.

LII

Within the rich green sward May the strawberry did crimson, and when she found one, happy and laughing for joy, quickly she ran to me that I might with her share, but I would not. Then came the battle. With one arm I seized her two wrists and her waist, and with my other hand forced her of the fruit to eat. At first she resisted, but soon wearying of the unequal struggle, for mercy begged, promising to pay a ransom of kisses; then, like the bird whose cage is opened, she 'd take to flight and escape, the witch, to conceal herself behind a bush.

LIII

Next I 'd hear her laugh amid the leaves at having tricked me thus. — Some busy bee emerging from a bell, a lizard, a grasshopper on its long slender legs springing, a caterpillar caught upon her lace, soon

brought her back uttering dreadful shrieks. Then she'd hide her head upon my breast, quite pale, trembling when the branches in the wind did move. Her beauteous breasts with the beating of her heart trembled and fluttered like two little turtle-doves caught in their nest, and which flutter their wings lightly in the hands of the fowler.

LIV

While reassuring her, with practised hand the monster I would seize, and, her fear now gone, she'd turn to laughter again, and, nestling on me anew, laugh at herself and kiss me as she said, "Ye heavens, how I love him!" Then when I kissed her back, dreamy she leaned her head upon my shoulder and closed her eyes, as if to sleep away. The long beam of light pressing through the leaves gilded her lovely brow. The nightingale sang its pearly trills, and the scent-perfumed breeze softly breathed under the arches green.

LV

Never a word we spake and sad we both did seem, and yet if anywhere on earth happiness doth exist, we twain most happy were. But what could speech have served? On ruddy lips the words we stayed; the

thoughts we knew. We had but one mind, but one soul for the pair of us, and, as it were, in Paradise in one another's embrace locked, we could not dream other heaven than ours might be. Our veins, our hearts in harmony pulsed; in the ravishment of ecstasy profound the very world was well forgot; nor before our eyes did horizon spread.

LVI

Gone is all that happiness. Who 'd have believed it? Each to the other now a stranger is, for 't is the way of men, — whose Ever is never greater than a six months' span? Our love has flown, — Heaven knows whither. My goddess, like painted butterfly that flies and leaves but bloom of red and white upon the finger tips, her flight has taken, leaving in my heart naught but mistrust of the present and bitter remembrance of the past. But what of that? Love is a strange thing. In those bygone days I loved, and now I set my loves so fair in wretched verse.

LVII

Thus, gentle reader, is my whole story told most faithfully to you, so far as my memory (an ill-kept

register) can recall to my thoughts trifles that mean so much, for they make up love, and by and by we laugh at them. — Forgive this pause. The bubble I took pleasure in blowing and which floated in the air, gorgeous with prismatic fires, has suddenly faded out into mere drop of water, bursting when it touched the gable-roof's angle. Even so, when it met reality, my glorious dream was spent, and now for mother only have I love. All other affection in me has died out.

LVIII

Except love for thee, O Poesy, that speakest ever loud in chosen souls! Poesy! O golden-haloed angel, who, passing from one world to another without fear of soiling thy white form by contact with ours for a moment, within the gloom of our night thy flight dost stay; whisperest words to us, and with the tip of thy wing driest our bitter tears. And thou, Poesy's twin sister, Painting, God rivalling, and His equal, sublime deception, wondrous imposture, that life restorest and nature doublest, to you twain I do not bid farewell.

LIX

Let me to my theme return. The young enthusiast a handsome cavalier was in very truth, and certes a maid more chaste than Veronica might well for him love have felt. But before I go farther it might be well to sketch his portrait, for the outer form helps one to know what is within. Foreign suns had shone upon him and enriched with hue of tan his Italian skin, naturally pale. His hair, wildered by his hands' agitation, fell over a brow which Gall ecstatically would have felt for six months, and taken for base for a dozen treatises.

LX

An imperial brow of artist and poet; that of itself the half of the head did form. Broad and full, bending under inspiration which in each wrinkle untimely drawn, concealed superhuman power, great thoughts; and it bore written these words, "Belief and Power." The rest of the face corresponded with this noble brow, yet was there something in it unpleasant, and, faultless though it was, one wished it might have different been. Irony and sarcasm gleamed over it, rather than genius. The lower part the upper seemed to mock.

LXI

Strange the effect of this combination. It was like a demon under angel's tread writhing; hell under heaven opened. Though he had glorious eyes, long ebony brows towards the temples fining, over the skin gliding as a serpent crawls, a fringe of fluttering silken lashes, yet his lion-like glance and the fatal flash that shot at times from his eyes made one shudder and turn pale in spite of all. The boldest look must, perforce, be cast down before that Medusa glance which could change to stone, though gentle he strove to make it seem.

LXII

On his stern lip, shadowed at each end with a slight mustache, elegantly waxed, a mechanical smile at times rested, but, in general, his expression deepest disdain did plain betray. In vain the fair, having again in society met him, did all that in such case coquette may do to draw him to her feet. To her amazement, nothing could touch his adamantine heart. Glances from behind her fan, sighs, simperings, half-spoken avowals, teasing arch, — all failed, and utterly.

LXIII

He was not the man to let himself be caught in the nets Veronica tried to set for him. A great eagle scarce sacrifices a feather to the lime which a sparrow holds. The foolish fly is caught by the wing within the web the spider spins in corner dark, but the wasp the whole with her bears away, and Gulliver, with single effort, breaks the Liliputians' silken chains. Yet so fine a prey was well worth troubling for, so, if she did not plainly speak the words, "I love you," she tried every art. But he, unchanging still, on her bestowed no thought.

LXIV

This was the reason why her door to comers all was closed. For, indeed, what cared her anxious heart for her courtier train? These handsome fellows, these dandies, who before now delighted her, seemed at this time affected or vulgar, their perfumed madrigals wearied her. Noise and light to her brought pain; all things troubled and annoyed her. On her dainty hand she rests her brow; her dimpled arm upon her chair hangs limp. Poor girl! just see the pallor of her cheeks!

Grief her roses to pearls has changed; within her eyes the tears begin to well.

LXV

The paper which the fair, with anguished mien, with rosy-nailed fingers crushes and crumples, unquestionably a love-letter is on azure vellum, which through the room sheds sweet and fashionable scent of amber. — I know all about it. — Yet the handwriting and the turn of phrase have something about them that tell of woman. Is it, then, a note intercepted from a rival, or does the lady on her own account to some young beau now write? The latter fact seems proved by the black spot upon the white finger tip, by the inkstand, and by the raven's quill.

LXVI

Suddenly, bird-like looking up, and throwing back a curl astray, her indolent pose she leaves, and begins, before calling for light and wax to seal her note, to read again quite low, as if afraid the echo might understand. "I will not send it. I 've written it ill," she says, the paper tearing. Low is her voice. "It is only fit within the fire to go." It was very cold, the flames

were hot. The paper, like the damned in hell, flashed up in blaze of blue,

LXVII

And disappeared. — While the sheet is being consumed, the girl another takes, a moment thinks, and then begins. Her hand, as swift as race-horse at Newmarket, scarce the paper touches. She 's filled her page while yet the ink of the first words undried is. — "Don Juan!" — With uncovered head, Don Juan before the lady stands. — Veronica agitated, with her eyes burning bright: "This note to my lord Albertus." — "The painter who lives at the inn of the Monkey Green?" — "The same; and within an hour at farthest, Don Juan, see that you are back."

LXVIII

Albertus, I need not tell you, is the handsome swain I 've just described a few stanzas above. An artist was he, loving with passion fanatical painting and verse, to the full as much as music. Nor could he have told, had God the choice given him, which he would rather be, Mozart or Dante. But I who knew him as well as he did himself, — better perhaps, — I

believe that he would have said Raphael. For, of these three sisters equal in merit, at bottom painting was his favorite and his truest talent.

LXIX

He considered the world an infamous pot-house. What he believed about woman and man was what Hamlet thought, — he would not have given a copper for the pair. Womankind delighted him not, save in painting, and having since birth inquired the why and wherefore, he was pessimistic as the oldest of men might be; consequently, more generally sad than otherwise. Love was but an empty word to him; although quite young, still, for long years past, of belief in it he had still none. Thus within his days moved many hours of weariness.

LXX

All the same, his ills he patient bore. Great knowledge a very great scourge is sure to be; a child into an old man it makes. At the very outset of life, novice though one be, there is nothing new in what one feels; when the cause appears the effect is already known; existence is burdensome; all is savourless. To the

sick man's palate pimento tasteless is; the much-tried nostrils scarce can ether smell: love becomes a mere spasm; glory an empty phrase; like a squeezed lemon arid the heart becomes. Behind Werther Don Juan ever stalks.

LXXI

Our hero, like Eve his ancestress, had, by the serpent urged, tasted the bitter fruit. A god he desired to be. When naked he beheld himself and possessed in full of knowledge human, he longed for death, but his courage failed him, and as one tires of treading the well-known path, he sought a new road to discover. Now, did he find the world of his dreams? I doubt it, for in the search his passions he had outworn. He had lifted up the veil and glanced behind. At twenty he might have been laid in his coffin dark, of all illusions bereft.

LXXII

Woe! Woe! unto him who the fathomless ocean of man's heart imprudently seeks to sound! Too oft the sounding lead, instead of golden sand and pearly shells that lovely shine, brings up but foul and stinking mud. — If I could live another life again, certes I

should not within it all search out as hitherto I have done. What matters after all, whether the cause be sad, if the effect produced be sweet? Let us be merry; let us outwardly be happy. A handsome mask is better than an ugly face. Then why, poor fools, do we snatch it off?

LXXIII

If he had been the arbiter of his fate you may be sure that many a chapter of life's novel he would have skipped, and passed at once to the conclusion of this most foolish tale. But uncertain whether he ought to doubt, deny, believe, or seek in death the riddle's answer, like down wind-driven he let his life drift on as chance itself did will. The affairs of the world troubled him but little: the things of heaven interested him still less. As far as his soul went, I must tell you, even at the risk of your blame incurring, that he did not believe in its existence any more than in God's.

LXXIV

That was the way he was made — a nature strange — and yet his soul, which he disbelieved in, was pure. What he sought was nothingness; nothing would he have gained if hell had been suppressed. A strange

man indeed! He possessed every virtue he ridiculed, and the angel who, above, in his record indignant wrote some gross heresy, some damnable sophistry, when it came to deeds found him less guilty, and as he beheld within his nature the good and holy, once more the anathema withheld. For a fallen tear the blasphemy had blotted from the fatal page.

LXXV

Now, for a change of scene. — At present we are at the Green Monkey Inn, the abode of my lord Albertus, and in his studio. Tell me, most ordinary reader, do you know what a painter's studio is? — A tempered light from above falling gives everything an aspect strange. It is like a picture by Rembrandt, in which the canvas shows a white dot shining through the dark. — In the centre of the room by the easel, under the brilliant beam in which atoms whirl, stands a lay figure that might a phantom be. Everything half shadow and reflection is.

LXXVI

The shadows grow deeper within the corners than even under the old arches of a nave. It is a world,

a universe apart, in no wise resembling the world we live in; a fantastic world in which everything to the eyes doth speak; everything is poetic; in which modern art shines by the side of that of old. Beautiful things of every time and every land: a sample page, from the book out torn; weapons, furniture, drawings, casts, marbles, pictures, Giotto, Cimabue, Ghirlandajo, and I know not whom; Reynolds by Hemskerk's side, Watteau by Correggio's, and Perugino between the Van Loos twain.

LXXVII

Lacquered ware and vases of Japan, monsters and porcelain ware, pagodas golden with little bells all hung, glorious Chinese fans it would take too long to describe; Spanish knives, Malay creeses, with wavy blades; khandjars, yataghans with rich-wrought sheaths; lin-stock arquebusses, matchlocks, blunderbusses; helms and corslets, battle-maces, bassinets, damaged, in holes, rusted, stained; innumerable objects, good for nothing, but glorious to behold; Oriental caftans, doublets mediæval; rebecs and psalteries, instruments outworn: a den, a museum, and a boudoir in one!

LXXVIII

Around the walls many canvases hanging, untouched for the most part, others just begun; a chaos of colours but half alive. — Leonora on horseback, Macbeth and the witches, Lara's children, Marguerite at prayer; sketches of portraits, among which one framed, of a young girl, light on a dark background, stands out and sparkles; so fair that one knows not by what name to call it, whether peri, fairy, or sylph, — a graceful, delicate being; an angel from heaven whose wings have been clipped to prevent its flying away.

LXXIX

With her beautiful head and her thoughtful, resigned look, she seemed to be a *Mater Dei*, after Masaccio, yet it was only the portrait of a former mistress, the one he best and most loved; a Venetian, who, in her gondola one night on the Canaleio had been stabbed to death. The beauty's husband, knowing her unfaithful, had planned the deed. The story was a regular romance. Albertus to the dead had drawn near, the black stuff pulled away, sketched the portrait, which he finished from memory, and then never again after of her spoke.

LXXX

Only when his eyes fell upon the canvas, concealed from indifferent glances by a curtain thick, a furtive tear, forthwith dried up, gleamed in them. A sigh from out his breast softly rose, his brows he bent, but ne'er a word did say. At Venice an Englishman dared make an offer; he would have emptied his purse the masterpiece to own, but that would have been to profane — *il Santo Ritratto* — and as he persisted and offered yet more wealth, Albertus raging sought to drown the man below the Rialto.

LXXXI

Albertus was painting. It was a landscape. Salvator would have named it *Selve selvagge*. Rocks in the foreground, in the middle distance the towers of a castle showing their sharp vanes against a blood-red sky filled with islands of clouds. The mighty oaks were bending like the lightest trees, leaves up in the air did whirl, the faded grass, like the rolling billows of a midnight sea, under its gusts did rise and fall; while incessant lightning with its red light lit up the tops of the blown pines, bending o'er the depths as over the mouth of hell.

LXXXII

A man came in. It was Juan. A blue light shone in the studio, and though he had no tail, nor horns, nor cloven foot, although he did not smell of pitch or sulphur, his eagle glance, his lip by grin sardonic curled, his gesture stiff, his voice, his gait, would have made any man at all prudent hasten quick to his Bible and sprinkle him with holy water. None of these things did Albertus do. He looked and saw him not, for his soul and his eyes on his painting were fixed. — "My lord, a note," said this devil Mercury as he pulled at his doublet.

LXXXIII

The painter the note opened, looked for a signature, and none did find. — "Base wretch," between his teeth he muttered. — "Will you go?" — "I will." — "When?" asked Don Juan in softened tone. — "Immediately." — "By Jupiter, that is the way to speak. The lady lives but a step from here. I shall lead you thither." — "It is well," said Albertus, taking down his sword, an Andrea Ferrara, a trusty blade tempered with the blood of many a brave. "I am with you. Pietro!" — A sunburnt face at the door

appeared and said: "What doth my lord will?" "Quick, bring here to me my cloak and hat."

LXXXIV

In less time than it takes to tell, the man was back. In a moment the young cavalier's toilet was done, and the valet having brought a mirror, he smiled, and with himself seemed well content. But suddenly, his complexion, always pale, a paler white did turn. Whether he saw it or merely fancied it — he 'd seen within the frame the Venetian lady's head move, and her mute lips ope as if she sought to speak. "Well, my lord?" said Don Juan. — "Dear one," the painter said, the portrait kissing with a sad, soft smile, "it is too late to draw back now."

LXXXV

The pair went out. Deserted was the town. Scarce here and there some open window. The rain with swift-falling drops the dark sky rayed; the north wind made every vane shriek and scream as in heavy weather scream the gulls. A belated toper went by, pitching up against the walls; a street girl at her corner waited. Albertus, silent and gloomy, followed Juan. Surely he

had neither the mien nor the gait of a lover; a thief to the gibbet led, or schoolboy on his way to punishment, never stepped more slow than he.

LXXXVI

He might to his place have returned, but the adventure after all was really strange and such as ardently to pique his curiosity; so our hero meant to see the end. The house was reached. Don Juan seized the brazen knocker of the postern door and knocked a master's knock. Black eyes, white brows, gleamed behind the panes. The house was illumined, and light flashed upon the darkened walls; from landing to landing the light came down; the bronze door oped, and the splendid, vast interior to the young cavalier's gaze was revealed.

LXXXVII

A little negro boy, a torch of perfumed wax holding, under the porch was standing, in rich and gallant livery of scarlet trimmed with gold. — "Here," said Juan, "fair page, lead his lordship by the secret passage." — Albertus followed. At the end of the corridor a curtain rich half drawn back behind him closed. Scenting his approach, two great white greyhounds on the carpet

lying, snuffed the air, raised their long heads, uttered low and anxious whimper, and then fell back and dozed.

LXXXVIII

Upon my word, it looked like the room of a duchess. Everything was to be found in it, — comfort, elegance, and wealth. On a handsome citron-wood table shone an alabaster lamp that cast around a soft and bluish light. Pearls, silks, a casket with steel knobs, rich sepias, bright water-colours, albums, screens delicately wrought; the latest review, the most recent novel, a black mask broken; innumerable fashionable trifles cast pell-mell were strewn upon chairs and tables in attractive disorder.

LXXXIX

Our inamorata, half seated, half lying upon a divan soft, uttered, as if surprised, a little cry when Albertus entered; then, her glance the mirror gaining, puffed out her sleeve and rearranged a disorderly ribbon. Never had the signora been better dressed. She was adorable, just fit to make recruits for the devil — as fit as society lady, nay, more. Her black and brilliant eyes showed

under their long eyelids such *morbidezza*, her manner, her gestures, such graceful abandon.

XC

For a moment Albertus thought he saw his Venetian fair. The strange head-dress, adorned in the Italian fashion with great golden balls and sequins pierced; the coral necklace, the cross, the amulet, the knots of ribbons, the whole dress; the rich-coloured skin with its warm, deep tones; the dreamy look, the lazy attitude; the glance identical, the speech the same. She resembled her so that he was deceived. Knowing Albertus and his temper eccentric, the witch had thought it well to assume this mask to slake her lust.

XCI

Veronica rang. The golden portière parted. A little page, a rich livery wearing, entered, trays in his hands bearing — a genuine Flemish page, a fair and rosy head like that seen in Terburg's painting in the Louvre. Upon the table he placed flagons and cakes, silver cups and silverware, poured the wine into glasses lofty, bowed to the lovers, and then withdrew. The wine was Rhine wine, whose golden robe was turning

yellow with age, a wine bottled at least an hundred years ago, or two.

XCII

Within the tankards it glowed like gold. A single glass would have sufficed a man to daze; with the second Albertus quite tipsy was. To his fascinated glance all things did double show, floating contourless in vapour dim; the floor uprose, the walls appeared to spin. As for the beauty, all shame behind her casting, and letting her lust a free hand have, with her passionate arms she clasped him round the neck, clung to his body in heat and madness, clutched at his head and tried to make him bend until her lips he met.

XCIII

Albertus was neither of ice nor stone; and even had he been, under the dark eyelids of the lady shone a sun whose fire would stone have vivified and melted ice. An angel, a son of heaven, to be in his place would have sold his stall in the paradise of God. — "Oh!" said he, "my heart burns with the strange flame that in your glance flashes, and my soul I'd give to possess you alone, wholly and forever. A single

word of your lips would make me renounce life eternal, for is eternity worth a single minute of your days?"

XCIV

—"Is that the truth?" answered Veronica, a smile on her lips and with an ironic look. "And will you repeat what you just have said?" "That to possess you, to the devil I'd give my soul, if have it the devil would? Yea, madam, I've said it."—"Then forever accursed be!" cried the young man's guardian angel. "From you I go, for no longer are you God's."—The painter in his madness heard not the voice, and the angel flew away. A glow of sulphur filled the room, and Mephistophelian laughter indescribable suddenly sounded in the air.

XCV

For an instant Veronica's eyes shone with darksome fire like those of orfreys in darkness hid. Albertus saw it not, for certes, had he beheld the glance, great though his courage, he would have crossed himself for fear, on beholding the wild and grim look,—for it was indeed a glance that spoke of unending evil, a glance of the damned, of the devil the time inquiring.

It read: "Ever, Forever, Eternity!" Most horrible, truly. The eye of man blasted by such a glance would die and melt as melts the pitch within the furnace cast.

XCVI

Her lips trembled. It seemed as if some blasphemy were about to escape, when suddenly she said, "I love you," springing like a maddened tiger. "But know you well what is woman's love? When you asked for mine did you test your soul? Did you estimate aright the strength of your heart? What mighty power within you do you feel capable of bearing such burden without fail? 'Ever, forever!' Think again! Within the wide universe but one being is capable of love eternal. That being is God, for He unchanging is. Man, creature of a day, but for a day doth love."

XCVII

Within the room, a beam from the lamp, stealing pale and faint upon the gilded walls, behind the curtains, discreetly drawn, a bed suggests. — Albertus, no word answering (the best reply, after all), thither draws her, and to the edge of the bed doth her gently push. . . .

Here in his shame-faced style a classical narrator, with embarrassment blushing, does not fail to stop. — What are not these worthy points made to say? Basilio never strikes them out on the ground that they are immoral, and in a novel chaste they stand as the hieroglyph of what is not particularly chaste, or not at all.

XCVIII

But I, who am no prude, and have no gauze or vine-leaf on my sentence to stick, not one thing shall I omit. — The ladies who this moral tale may read I beg will be indulgent to a few warm details; the wisest of them, I trow, will note them without a blush; the others will scream. Besides — and mothers of families will please take notice, — what I am writing is not intended for maidens young whose bread and butter is cut in slices for them. My lines are a young man's lines, and not a catechism. Emasculate them I will not; in their decent cynicism they go on, straight or crooked.

XCIX

Little reck I, provided my lady Poesy, their mistress absolute, finds them tickle her fancy; so, chaste like

Adam before the Fall, they onward freely go in their sainted nudity, free from all vice, and showing without fear all that the hypocrite world so carefully conceals. — I am not of those whom a bosom bared or a skirt rather short compels aside to look; my gaze on these things does not rest by preference. — Why declaim so much against an artist's work? What he does is sacred. — Pray, ye rigorous critics, do you see naught else than that?

C

The stay-lace the painter had cut. Veronica's lovely frame for sole vestment her Flanders linen now had on; a mere cloud of lawn; spun air; a breath; a mist of gauze, that under its network allowed the gaze to wander with delight; in a word, the flimsiest stuff you can think of. — It did not take Albertus long to tear away this rampart frail, and in a hand's turn he had his beauty nude. — He was wrong; it is spoiling one's own pleasure; this sort of thing is killing one's own love and its grave digging, alas! for too oft with the veil illusion and desire both fall away.

CI

Not thus this time; the lady was so fair that a saint in heaven would for her sake damnation have welcomed. A poet in love could not have thought out an ideal more perfect. — O Nature! Nature! by the side of thy work what is painting worth? What becomes of Raphael, of beauty the lord? What of Correggio, Guido, and Giorgione, Titian and all the names whose praise one age to the other sings? O Raphael, believe me, thy brushes cast away, and thou, Titian, thy palette. God alone the mighty Master is; His secret well he keeps, and none may make it out; in vain we strive.

CII

Oh, the lovely picture! — Blushing rosy red with shame, red as berry in May, upon her heaving breasts her head she bows and her arms doth cross — with her arch, roguish look, her little pout, her long fluttering lashes her cheeks caressing, her skin, browner showing 'gainst the white sheets, her long hair naturally curling, her eyes flashing with carbuncle's glow, her fair, golden neck, her coral lips, her Cinderella foot and her limbs

divine, and what the shadow hides and what may be guessed, — in her own self she more than a seraglio well was worth.

CIII

The curtains have closed again. — Frantic laugh, shrieks of voluptuousness, ecstatic moans, long-drawn sighs, sobs and tears, — *Idolo del mio cor! Anima mia!* my angel, my life! and all the words in that language strange which love delirious invents in its heat, these were the sounds one heard. — Wrecked was the alcove; the bed creaked and groaned; pleasure a very rage became. Showers of kisses and storm of movements lascivious; arms round bodies grappling and clutching; eyes flaming, teeth meeting and biting, breasts that convulsive bound.

CIV

The lamp flared up, and in the alcove's depths flashed, lightning-like, a red and tawny light. 'T was but for an instant, yet Albertus saw Veronica, her skin by burning marks all rayed, pale as though dead, and so disfigured that he shuddered at the sight. Then all once more dark became. The witch her lips to the young cavalier's glued again, and anew the couch bent

and creaked under love's bounds. — Midnight struck. — The sound mingled its shrill falsetto with the low lashing of the rain upon the window pane, and in the near-by tower hooted the owl.

CV

Suddenly, within his very grasp, — a prodigy fit to confound the strongest brain, — Albertus felt the charms of the fair melt away, and vanish the very flesh. Broken was the prism. It was no longer the woman whom all adored, but a foul hag with great green eyes rolling under eyebrows thick, and, to seize her prey, at full length stretching her long, thin arms, like hooks. Satan himself would have drawn back. A few white hairs hung stiff down her skinny neck; her bones showed plain under withered breasts, and her ribs stuck out of her sides so foul.

CVI

When he beheld himself so close to this living death, with terror the blood in his veins ran cold. His hair upon his head did stand, and his teeth chattered as though they would break. Meanwhile, the hideous skeleton her blue lips to his cheek pressing, everywhere

with strident laugh pursued him. Within the shadow at the foot of the bed climbed shapes most strange. Incubus, nightmares, ghastly, deformed spectres, deathly multitude of Goya's brains! Horned snails issued from beneath the bricks and silvered the old walls with phosphorescent slime; the lamp smoked and sputtered.

CVII

Instead of the gilded bedstead, a filthy couch; in place of the boudoir rose a little room of aspect wretched, with an old window frame of panes badly cracked; the walls, green with damp, were wet with rain, the great drops falling upon the grimy floor. Juan, a cat again, cast innumerable sparks, and fascinated Albertus with the gleam of his glance, and like the dog in Faust, waving around him magic bands, traced a brilliant circlet with his tail upon the hearth, upon which flickered a blue flame.

CVIII

Hop! Hop! cried the old woman; and down the chimney, suddenly ablaze with golden fires, two broomsticks, bridled and saddled, entered the room, in every direction kicking, caracoling, prancing, rolling, and leap-

ing as do horses by their master called. — "These be my English mare and my Arab steed," said the witch, opening her crablike hands and patting on the neck the broomsticks both. — A swollen toad with long slender paws the stirrup held. — Housch! housch! like grasshoppers swift the two broomsticks their flight do take.

CIX

Trap! trap! they go as goes the north wind. 'Neath them the earth shadows pass in long, grey lines; above, the cloudy sky hurries by; on the dim horizon strange shadows pass. The mill turns around and pirouettes. The moon, now full, shows her light like lantern dim; a curious donjon underneath gazes; a tree its black limbs outstretches far; a gibbet haggard shakes its fists and follows, its corpses bearing; a crow, croaking as it scents the dead, flaps heavily through the air, and with its wing strikes the brow of the young man dazed.

CX

Bats and owls, orfreys and vultures bald, great owls and birds of night with dun, flaming eyes; monsters of all kinds yet unknown, strygæ with hooked beaks, ghouls, larvæ, harpies, vampires, and were-wolves,

impious spectres, mammoths and leviathans, crocodiles and boas, growling and snarling, hissing, laughing and chattering, swarming and gleaming, flying, crawling, leaping, till the ground is covered and darkened the air. — Less swift is the speed of the breathless brooms, and with her gnarled fingers the bridle drawing, "This is the place," the old hag cried.

CXI

The place was lighted by a flame, a blue light casting like that of blazing punch. It was an open spot within the forest's depth. Wizards in their gowns and witches nude astride upon their goats adown the four avenues from the four corners of the world arrived at once. Investigators into sciences occult, Fausts of every land, magi of every rite, dark-faced gypsies, and rabbis red-haired, cabalists, diviners, hermeceutists black as ink and asthmatically gasping, — not one of them all failed at the meeting-place.

CXII

Skeletons preserved in dissecting rooms, stuffed animals, monsters, greenish fœti, yet dripping all from their spirit bath, cripples and lamesters on slugs

mounted; man hanged to death with protruding tongue grimacing; pale faces beheaded, with red-circled neck, with one hand staying their tottering heads; every creature ever put to death (a dreadful blood-stained crowd); handless parricides in black veils shrouded; heretics grouped in tunics sulphurous; wretches on the wheel broken, contused and blue; drowned ones with marbled flesh — a sight most dismal to behold!

CXIII

The president in great black chair seated, with taloned fingers the leaves of his book turning, was busy backward spelling God's sacred names. The light that gleamed from his orbs of green the book illumined, and on the open page made the words flash out in lines of fire. They were waiting for the Master ere the fun began. All were growing impatient. He was slow in coming, and to the evocations seemed a deaf ear to turn. Albertus fancied he saw a tail, a pair of horns, goat's feet, great round eyes in lustre lacking, — an apparition horrid.

CXIV

At last he came; but no devil of sulphur stinking and of aspect terrific; no devil old-fashioned, but the

dandiest of fiends, wearing imperial and slight moustache, twirling his cane as well as could have done a Boulevard swell. You could have sworn he'd just come from a performance of "Robert the Devil," or "The Temptation," or had been attending some assembly fashionable. He limped like Byron (but not worse than he), and with his haughty mien, his aristocratic looks, and his exquisite talent tying for his cravat, in every drawing-room a sensation he would have made.

CXV

This dandy Beelzebub made a sign, and the company drew together the concert to hear. Neither Ludwig Beethoven, nor Gluck, nor Meyerbeer, nor Theodore Hoffmann, Hoffmann the fantastic, nor stout Rossini, of music king, nor Chevalier Karl Maria von Weber, could surely with all their genius have invented and written the wondrous symphony which these black dilettanti played at first. Boucher and Bériot, Paganini himself could not have embroidered a stranger theme with more brilliant pizzicati.

CXVI

Virtuosi with their dried, thin fingers made the strings of the Stradivarii sing again. Souls seemed to sound in the voices of the grave; cavernous gongs like thunder rumbled; a jolly sprite, his round face swelling funnily, blew in two horns at once; here, one strikes on a bone; the other, for a lark takes his belly for a drum, two bones for sticks; four little demons with iron bows make four giant double-basses roar and moan; while a stout soprano opes wide his gaping jaws. The result: a hellish row.

CXVII

The concert finished, began the dances. Hands with hands the chains did form. Within the great black chair the devil seated himself and the signal gave. — Hurrah! hurrah! The crowd, spurning the ground, howling and mad, dashed along like bridleless steed. The heavens, the sight to shun, closed their starry eyes, and the moon, in cloudlets twain her face now veiling, with fear from the horizon fled. Terrified the waters stayed, and the echoes' selves silent became, dreading the blasphemies to repeat which on that night they heard.

CXVIII

It was as though there whirled, aflame, through the dark, the monstrous signs of a zodiac sombre. The heavy hippopotamus, four-footed Falstaff, awkward rose upon its massive legs and broke out in lascivious gambadoes. The crippled, truncated and lame, leaped like toads, and the goats, livelier, performed entrechats and, graceful, kicked; a death's-head, with long, lean legs, trotted along like spider huge; in every corner swarmed some hideous thing; worms slimed over the trodden ground.

CXIX

Loose in the wind their hair, their cheeks aflame, the women twisted their bodies nude into postures infamous, whereat Aretino's self would have blushed. Hot kisses marked the bruised breasts and shoulders white; black hairy fingers touched the hips; sounds of lustful embrace over all arose; eyes flashed with electric glance; lips burned in lascivious pressure; fierce laughter, shrieks, guttural sounds rose in the air. Never did Sodom, never did Gomorrah loathsome darken the sky and soil this earth with more hideous unions foul.

CXX

The devil sneezed. To fashionable nostrils the odour of the company unbearable was. "God bless you," said Albertus politely. Scarce had he uttered that sacred name when phantoms, wizards and witches, sprites and gnomes, as by enchantment, into thin air vanished. With terror he felt sharp claws, fierce teeth strike at his flesh, from him torn. He shrieked, but his cry by none was heard. — On that morn, near Rome, peasants found upon the Appian Way the body of a man stone dead, his back broken, his neck twisted.

CXXI

Happy as a boy who has finished his task at last I 've got to the end of my poem so moral. — Are you as glad as I am, reader dear? In vain for two months past to bring this volume to a close my hand upon the sheet the pen did screeching drive; the unwilling theme but slowly went; the stanzas, lazily rocking on their golden wings, together came like swarm of bees, or else disorderly by the wayside idly fluttered. The numbers grew, one sheet upon another, — the ink undried still, — was laid, and I, all courage losing, to myself

kept repeating: "To-morrow, to-morrow 't will be done."

CXXII

This Homeric poem, in the world unequalled, presents a wondrous allegory profound. But if you the marrow wish, the bone you must break; to enjoy the scent the vase must needs be oped; the curtain be drawn from the painting it hides; and when the ball is done the domino's mask be cast away. I could have explained clearly every part, and to each word attached some learned gloss. But I take it, reader gentle, you 've brains enough to follow me. So, good-night. Close the door. Give me the tongs, and tell my man to bring me a volume of Pantagruel.

The Comedy of Death

THE COMEDY OF DEATH

LIFE IN DEATH

I

'T was All Saints' Day. A drizzle cold along the horizon's gloom like a thick woof spread its network gray; cold the north wind blew; scattered russet leaves fell fluttering from the branches bare of the stunted elms.

And each and all went into the cemetery vast and lone to kneel by the stone placed over the dead; there to pray to Almighty God for the rest of their souls, and with fresh flowers tearfully to replace the pale immortelles and withered wreaths.

I, who knew not the bitter grief of having buried either my mother or my sire under the withered turf, at chance I walked gazing at the tombs, or, through

an opening between the branches of the trees, at the city's swelling domes.

And as I noted many a leafless cross, many a grave on which the grass grew tall, where none to pray knelt down, with pity I was filled; with pity great, for the poor forsaken tombs which none on earth within his heart did bear.

No trace of green upon these slabs; and yet the names of widows desolate, or husbands in despair, their falsehood bare displayed to every passer's eye, with ne'er a trace of moss to veil their huge letters black.

And, as I gazed, within my heart uprose a thought which ever since has my soul possessed. Suppose it were true that the dead raging within their biers do twist about their knotty arms and strive to throw off their covers of stone with efforts incredible?

Perchance the tomb no refuge is where on pillow hard man may in peace at last forever sleep, forgetful of all worldly things, pleasure nor pain feeling, remembering not being or having been.

Perchance for sleep there is no desire; and when the rain filters downward to the corpse come the cold,

the weariness, and the lonesomeness of the grave. Oh! how sadly one must dream within that place, where neither moan nor breath can move the shroud's long, stiff folds!

Perchance, alive to the passions in us that once did blaze, the ashes of our hearts still feel and move within the tomb, and some remembrance of this world within the next bears with it a remnant of a life of yore with ours mingled.

These lonesome dead! No doubt they wives did have, some one both near and dear; some one to whom their thoughts they told. But, oh! the horror of their grief if ever they did awake within the depths of their tomb on which never a tear nor a flower doth fall!

To feel that one has passed away without leaving more trace than does the ship's wake on ocean's face; that one is dead to all; to see that the best beloved have one so soon forgot; and that the weeping willow with its long, bending boughs alone over one's grave mourns.

At least if one could, when the pale, wan moon opes its calm eyes with silvery glance, and earthward

looks and casts a bluish light, — if one could, within the cemetery's range, between the white tombs, the will o' the wisp o'er the grass flitting, under the branches stroll a while at least!

If one could home return within the house, the stage of the former life, and, chilled, by the fireside within the arm-chair sit; glance the old books over; within the desk rummage until the time when dawn the window lighting drove one back to coffin cold.

But no. Upon the mortuary bed one must remain, with covering none but the sheeted shroud; no sound the silence breaking save crawl of worm that slowly drags towards its prey, cutting its secret mine; no sight but night.

Then, if they be jealous, the dead, all that Dante has told of torments in his burning spiral would pleasant be to that they suffer. Lovers, who know what jealousy is, what tortures that frenzy means, imagine a jealous corpse!

Powerless and wroth! He is there, in his grave, while she, who was loved with heart's deep love, false to the oaths she swore, now in another's arms repeats

what she blushing whispered, when nestling close, with sacred words.

And to be unable to come, on a December night, while she is dancing, to cower in her room, and when she's back, and slowly, smilingly, before the glass her dress undoes, to show within the mirror's depths one's skeleton and barèd ribs.

To laugh hideously with toothless laugh; to mark with cold kisses her heaving breast; and clutching her white and rosy hand with bony fingers, to moan these words, with hollow voice that human no longer is: —

"Woman, you made me promises numberless. Have you forgot them all? I, in my sombre grave, — I remember still. You told me, at the hour when death came to me, that soon you would follow. Weary of waiting, now am I here to fetch you!"

Within my mind's depths a strange thought, cancer-like gnaws and wears me out. Mine eyes sunken become; upon my brow are wrinkles new; my hair, my very flesh, from off my temples drop, — for hideous is the thought.

For death no longer, then, the great Consoler is. Man, even in the tomb, 'gainst fate has no recourse, and one may no longer cease to grieve for life by caressing the blessed hope of calm and peace after the storm and stress of life.

II

Within my brain these thoughts revolving, thoughtful I stood, with deep-bowed head against a tombstone leaning. Brand-new it was, and on the white marble shoulder of the weeping figure the willow's long branches like a cloak did fall.

The north wind leaf by leaf stripped the wreath, the remnants of which on the column's top did lie. They seemed like tears which their flowers shed upon the maid in life's springtime removed; a gentle morning bloom withered before noon.

The crescent moon betwixt the yews did shine; great black clouds the wan sky crossed and drove still on; the will o' the wisps flashed around the graves, and the weeping willow its plumes did shake.

Plain in the night sounds I heard from the nether world arising! Moans of terror and agony deep; voices entreating new flowers upon their tombs; asking how went the world, and why the widows left behind so long delayed them to join.

Suddenly — scarce could I credit my own ears, — from under the gaping marble, oh, terror! oh, wonder! I heard the sound of speech. A dialogue it was, and from the depths of the grave sharp, shrill tones mingled with another voice.

Chilled with fear I was. With terror my teeth chattered; my trembling limbs almost gave way, for I understood the worm with the dead girl, of a sudden awaked upon this winter night within her icy cage, its hymen was celebrating.

THE DEAD GIRL

Is this an illusion? Has the night so long dreamed of, the wedding night, come at last? Is this my nuptial bed? Surely this the hour when the groom, young and scented, enjoys the beauty of the bride and from her brows removes the maiden orange-flower.

THE WORM

A long, long night 't will be, O fair dead girl! To me for ever Death hath thee betrothed. Thy bed is but the tomb. Now is the time when bays the watch-dog at the moon; when the foul vampire sails forth in search of prey; when downward swoops the crow.

The Dead Girl

Oh! beloved, quickly come; long since the hour is passed. Oh! draw me to thy heart, within thine arms close pressed, for cold I am and full of dreadful fears. Warm with thy kisses my mouth which icy feels. Oh! come to my side; and room I 'll make for thee, though narrow is our couch.

The Worm

Five feet in length by two in width; the size was ta'en with care. The couch too hard is; the groom will never come. Thy cries he hears not; at a feast he is. Come, upon thy pillow quietly lay thy head and cross thine arms again.

The Dead Girl

What is the damp and breathless kiss I feel? That lipless mouth, is it a human one? Is this a living kiss? Oh, wonder! none to right or left of me! With horror my bones do quake; my whole flesh quivers as quakes the aspen when blows the wind.

The Worm

Mine is the kiss; the earth-worm I, here to fulfil the solemn mystery. Possession now I take. Thy

husband I 've become, and faithful sure will be. The gladsome owl, with strong wing the air beating, sings our wedding song.

THE DEAD GIRL

Oh! if only some one by the cemetery would pass! In vain I strike my brow against the coffinboards; the lid too heavy is. Sounder than the dead he buries deep the grave-digger sleeps. The silence is profound; deserted is the road, and echo's self to my cries is deaf!

THE WORM

Mine are thine ivory arms; mine thy fair white breasts; mine thy polished waist and glorious hips luxuriant swelling; mine thy little feet; thy hands so soft; thy lips, and that first kiss which thy maidenly shame to love refused.

THE DEAD GIRL

'T is over! 'T is over! The worm is here. Its bite makes in my side a deep, broad wound; my heart it gnaws. Oh, torture! Oh, my God! the cruel pain! Mother, sister mine, why come you not unto my call?

The Worm

Within their hearts the thought of thee even now is gone; and yet upon thy grave, poor deserted one, the orange flowers still brilliant are. The funeral pall scarce folded is, yet like yester's dream they have forgot — forgot thee and for ever.

The Dead Girl

Grass faster grows within the heart than even on the grave, and soon the cross and lowly mound alone recall the presence of the dead. But where the cross that tells of tomb within the soul? Forgetfulness, second death, annihilation which I seek, come unto me! I call for you.

The Worm

Be now consoled, for Death gives Life. Upspringing under the shadow of the cross the eglantine more rosy is, more green the sward. The flower's roots within thy frame shall plunge, and where thou sleepest, tall shall wave the grass; for in God's hands is nothing lost.

One of the dead their speech had wakened for silence called. Lightning, not from heaven, but from earth,

showed me within their tombs all the dead; skeletons of bodies with yellowed bones, or purplish flesh in tatters falling away.

Both young and old the graveyard's inhabitants, poor forgotten dead, hearing upon their tombs but the roar of the gale, and to weariness a prey within their dwelling cold, sought with sightless eyes to read the hour upon Eternity's mighty dial.

Then all to darkness turned, and on my way I went, pale at having seen so much; with doubt and horror filled; weary in mind and body both. And, ever following me, countless cracked bells like the voices of the dead swung out to me the moans they tolled.

III

To my home I returned.—Gloomy thoughts swarmed and swept before mine eyes, with icy-cold wings my brow touching, just as at eventide around cathedral spire the flocks of crows their spirals wind, and circle ever round.

Within my room, where quivered a yellow light, all things assumed forms horrible and weird, and aspects passing strange. My bed a coffin seemed; my lamp a funeral light; my cloak outspread the darksome pall, with holy water oft bestrewed within the doorway while a prayer is breathed.

Within its frame enclosed the ivory Christ, nailed with outstretched arms upon the sombre stuff, more pallid still became, and as on Golgotha in last keen agony, the muscles on the yellowed face stood out in anguish writhing.

All the paintings, their faded hues illumed by the hearth-fire's gleam, strange tones assumed, and with inquisitive air, like spectators within stage-box seated,

all the smoky old portraits, and dull-toned pastels their eyes now opened wide.

A death's-head, from the skull well cast, white stood out, grimacing, garish under a bluish beam. I saw it to the bracket's edge advance; the jaws seemed striving speech to use, the eyes to light with glance.

From the dark orbs (where were no orbs) flashed sudden sparklings dun, as from a living eye. A breath came forth from 'twixt its shaking teeth. 'T was not the wind, for straight the folds of curtains by the window fell.

Then, like the voice one hears in dreams, sad as the moan of waves upon the shore, I heard a voice; and as that day so many things I 'd seen — so many effects marvellous of unknown cause — my dread was less this time: —

RAPHAEL

I am Raphael Sanzio, the mighty Master. Oh! brother, tell me, can you my features know in this hideous skull? For there is nothing 'mid the casts and masks — these shining skulls polished like helms of steel — that makes me different from them all.

And yet, 't is I, 't is I, indeed: the youth divine, the angel of beauty and the light of Rome, — Raphael of Urbino, — the brown-haired lad you see in museums, idly leaning, dreaming, resting his head upon his hand.

Oh! my Fornarina, my fair beloved! who took with a kiss my soul in ecstasy to heaven ascending. This, then, is your lover — the handsome angel-named painter — this head with its strange grimace. Well, 't is Raphael!

If e'er, asleep within the chapel's depth, she were to wake and come when calls my voice, with fear she filled would be. Nay, let the half-raised stone upon her head fall again. Oh! come not, come not! but keep within your tomb the dream within your heart.

Accursed analysers! Race most vile! Hyenas that track the funeral step by step the body to dig up! When will you be done breaking open biers to measure our bones and our dust to weigh? Let the dead sleep in peace.

My masters! Do you know — but who could have told you? — what one feels when the saw's teeth

tear our palpitating heart? Do you know whether death is not another life? And if, when their remains from the tomb are dragged, the dead are satisfied?

So you come to search with hands profane our tombs which you violate, and to steal our skulls! How bold you are! Do you never fear that some day, pale and wan, the dead may rise and curse you there just as I curse you?

So you fancy that in the rottenness you shall surprise the secrets of mother Nature and the work of God? It is not by the body the soul can be learned; the body but an altar is; genius is the flame; and you the fire put out.

Oh! Child Christs of mine! Oh! my dark-haired Madonnas! Oh! you who owe to me your fairest crowns, saints in Paradise! The learned cast my skull upon the ground, and you suffer it, nor hurl thunderbolts at these wretches accurst.

So 't is true: Heaven its power has lost; Christ is dead indeed! The age Science for its God has ta'en; for faith, Liberty. Farewell to the perfume sweet of

the mystic rose; to love, farewell. Farewell to poesy of old; to sacred beauty a long farewell.

In vain our painters, to see how shaped it was, within their hands shall turn and turn my head again; mine, mine alone my secret is. Copy they may my tones; copy they may the pose; but two things had I that shall fail them ever, — Love and Faith.

Tell me, which of you, of this age infamous the offspring mean, can saintly render woman's adored beauty? None, alas! not one. For your boudoirs, the haunts of lust, lascivious scenes you need. Who e'er glances at you, virgins mine, so draped? Oh! my sainted ones, no man.

The time has come. Your task is done. Like a wan old man the dying age bewails and struggles on. The Angel of Judgment to his lips the trumpet sets, and the voice is about to call: "Let justice be done; mankind is dead!"

No more I heard. Dawn with opal lips, quite sleepy yet, upon the dullish window-pane a chill beam cast, and I saw vanish the vision strange as vanishes the orfrey, by sudden gleam startled, under a Gothic arch.

DEATH IN LIFE

IV

Death is multiform: its face, its vesture changes oftener than actress lightsome. Beauteous it can make itself, and is not ever a sickening carcass that groans toothless and makes grimace most hideous to behold.

Its subjects do not all within the graveyard dwell; they sleep not all on pillows stony under the shadow of the vaults; they wear not all her pallid livery; not upon all has the gate been closed in the gloom of the grave.

Dead there are of kinds most various. To some stench befalls, and corruption, palpable nothingness, horror and disgust, night profound and dark, and the avid bier, its jaws wide opening like gaping monster.

Others, whom one sees unfearful go to and fro in the sight of the living under their shroud of flesh, have the invisible nothingness, the inner death which none

suspects, which none doth mourn, not even nearest and dearest.

For when one goes into the cities of the dead to visit the tombs of the unknown or famous, the monuments or the mounds, whether or not there lie asleep forever under the sombre shadows of the yews some friend beloved, — whether one weep or not,

One says: — Behold, dead are these. Moss has spread its veil over their names; fast the worm its web doth spin in the sockets of their eyes; their hair has made its way through the boards of their biers, and their flesh in dust doth fall upon the bones of their forbears.

At night their heirs fear not they shall return; even their dogs now scarce remember them. Their portraits, with smoke befogged, with dust thickly covered o'er, in shops are strown away; those who once envy fierce to them did bear, their praises now gladly sing — for they are dead and gone for good and all.

The Angel of Sorrow praying on their tomb alone for them mourns with tears of stone, and as the worm

their body gnaws, so gnaws forgetfulness their name with silent tooth. For tester they six feet of heavy mould do own. Dead are they; of the dead they are.

Perchance a tear, from your heart escaped, upon their dust, snow-strewn, rain-soaked, slowly filters down, which joy will bring them in their sad home; and their dried up hearts, feeling they are mourned, faintly beat once more.

But no one says, on seeing the man who bears death within his soul, "Rest and peace be thine!" — What to the sheath is given, to the blade is denied. The body is wept for and the wound is soothed, but the soul may break and die without any feeling dread or giving it a tomb.

And yet there is an agony horrible that none can ever guess; there is grief incredible that eye can never see; there is more than one cross on the Calvary of the soul, without the golden halo; without the woman white ever prostrate below.

Every soul is a sepulchre wherein things innumerable lie; hideous cadavers buried asleep within rosy faces.

Tears are always found beneath the living smile; the dead behind the living are, and truth to tell, mankind is a cemetery.

The unburied tombs of old cities dead, the halls and wells of Hundred-gated Thebes not so populous are; nor are there to be seen skeletons more dread, or a greater mass of bones and skulls with ruins mingled.

Some there are with no epitaphs on their tombs, who of the dead as in the catacombs build up a mighty mound; whose hearts are but a level field, where no cross shows, nor memorial stone, and which blind Death with divers dusts confusedly doth fill.

Others, less forgetful, have funeral vaults wherein are ranged their dead, as in the vaults of Ghebers and Egyptians; around their hearts their mummies stand, the pallid features recalling of all their former loves.

Lovingly embalmed in remembrance pure, within themselves they guard the soul they loved, — a treasure sad and charming both. Death dwells in them in the midst of life; they ever seek the dear soul lost, which on them smileth still.

Where, if one searches, will a skeleton not be found? What hearth is there that every night beholds the family circle unbroken yet? Where is the threshold, smiling and fair though it be, that has not beheld the owner outward pass under the black pall, never again homeward to turn?

The little flower which joys now, offering its blooming lips to kisses of the snow, the daughter is of Death. Perchance its roots into the ground from some loved dust have caught the scent divine that charms so much.

Oh! betrothed of yesterday, that are lovers still, the place where nest your loves has served like you some old man grim. Before your soft sighs had waked its echoes his death-rattle it heard, and the remembrance an odour sepulchral mingles with the sweet bridal perfumes.

Where shall we tread and not a tomb profane? Even if we had the wings of the dove, were swift-footed like the deer, and the waves traversed like the flashing fish, everywhere would be found the hostess, black and white, ready to receive us.

Oh! cease then, ye mothers young, to cradle your sons in the arms of bright imaginings; cease to dream of brilliant future for them. Spin them a shroud with the thread of their swaddling-clothes; for your sons, were they pure as angels and fair as they, to death are all condemned.

V

Amid sighs and moans and groans let us descend to its very depths the gloomy spiral and all its accursed turns. Our guide is no Vergil, the master poet; no Beatrix towards us her lovely head doth bend from distant Paradise.

For guide we have a wan-faced virgin, who never was kissed by golden tan from lips of sun. Colourless her cheeks, bluish her lips; alabaster white the nipples of her breasts, but rosy never.

A mere breath sways her delicate form; her arms, more translucent than jasper or agate, languidly hang by her side. From her hand escapes a withering flower, and folded on her back her diaphanous wings motionless remain.

More sombre than night, more staring than stone, under her ebony brows and her lashes long shine her two great eyes. Like the waves of Lethe, dark and silent flowing, her loosened hair her ivory flesh enfolds with silent clasp.

Upon her brow, the linen bands — chaste and simple ornament — with hemlock leaves and violets are twined. For the rest she is nude, and one laughs and trembles on seeing her approach; for her look sinister and alluring at the same time is.

Although she has lain in every bed on earth, under her wreath of white barren she still remains since eternity began. The burning kiss dies out upon her fatal lips, and of her virginity, the pallid rose has none e'er plucked.

She is the one that leads to tears and to despair; she is the one who from mother's lap doth take away her burden sweet and dear; she is the one who jealous lies between lovers twain and wills that in her turn she wedded be.

Bitter she is, and sweet; wicked she is, and good. On each illustrious brow she sets a crown, fearless and passionless. Bitter to fortunate ones; to the wretched sweet; alone she brings to mighty grief its consolation.

She gives a bed to those who, through the world, like Wandering Jew, are walking night and day and

sleep have never known. To all pariahs she opes her inn, and Phryne welcomes as she does the virgin; foe and friend as cordially receives.

Following the steps of this guide with face impassible, onward we go adown the spiral terrible towards the bourne unknown, through a living hell that knows not cave nor gulf, nor burning pitch, nor seas with sulphurous waves, nor great horned devil.

Here against a pane there is a light as of a lamp, with the shadow of a man. Let us the stairs ascend, draw near and see. "Ah! 't is you, Dr. Faustus! in the same attitude as Rembrandt's wizard in the sombre painting that gleams with light.

"What! have you not broken your alchemist's vials? Do you still bend your great, bald, sad brow over some manuscript old? Do you still seek within your book, by the light of that sun mystical, the word cabalistic that makes the Spirit rise?

"Tell me, has Science, your mistress adored, to your chaste desires yielded at last? Or, as when you first

met, do you kiss of her dress but the hem or eke her slipper? Is there yet in your breast asthmatic breath enough for a sigh of love?

"What sand or what coral has your lead brought up? Have you sounded the depths of this world's wisdom? Or as you drew from your well did you in your pail bring up nude, fair Truth, until now ignored? If you are a tree, where then are your fruits?"

FAUST

I have plunged within the sea, under the vault of the waves. The great fishes cast their fleeting shadows down to the water's depths. Leviathan lashed the abyss with its tail, and their lovely blue hair the sirens combed upon the coral reefs.

The hideous cuttle-fish and the monstrous polyp their tentacles all out-stretched; the shark and the orc enormous their great green eyes on me did turn; but to the surface I came again, for my breath failed me. A heavy mantle for aged shoulders is the mantle of the seas.

From my well limpid water alone have I drawn; the Sphinx, as I question, still silent is. Pallid and broken down, alas! I am still at *perhaps* and *I know not*, and the flowers of my brow are fallen like snow on the place where I have passed.

Oh! woe is me, that I, unguarded, tasted the golden apples of the tree of Science, for Science is Death. Not the upas of Java's isle, nor Afric's euphorbias, nor the manchineel that gives magnetic sleep, a stronger poison hold.

In nothing, now, do I believe. And when you came, for very weariness my study I was renouncing and ready my furnace was to break. Within my being not a fibre now thrills, and like a pendulum my heart alone doth beat with movement unchanging.

Nothingness! This, then, is what at the end one finds. As the tomb doth hold the dead, so doth my soul a living cadaver contain. It is to reach this point that I such pains have taken, and that, profitless, my soul to the winds I 've scattered as scattered is the grain.

A single kiss, oh! fair and gentle Marguerite, snatched from thy blooming mouth, so fresh, so small, is better worth than all of this. Seek not for the Word which in the Book has never been, but know how to live, forget not that you must live. Love, for that is all!

VI

The endless spiral within the depths doth plunge. All around, waiting but for the wrong answer ere your blood they suck, upon their great pedestals with hieroglyphs strewn, sphinxes with pointed breasts, with fingers armed with claws, roll their glittering eyes.

As one passes before them, at each step one stumbles on old bones, on carrion remains, on skulls that hollow sound. From every hole there issue stiffened limbs; and monstrous apparitions hideous flash through the darksome air.

It is here that Oedipus the riddle yet must solve, and that still is awaited the beam that shall dispel the darkness of eld. It is here that Death its problem doth propose, and that the traveller, her pallid face perceiving, draws back in affright.

Ah! how many noble hearts and souls so great in vain through every poesy and every passion all have sought the answer to the fatal page. Their own bones lie there with no sepulchral stone, with no inscription carved.

How many, Don Juans unknown, have filled their lists and still seek on! How many lips turn pale under kisses sweetest, which have never pressed their fancy's lips! How many desires to heaven from earth have returned, forever unappeased!

Students there are who would all things know, but who for valet and teacher never Mephistopheles find. In attic rooms are Fausts without their Marguerites, whom Hell repels and God casts out. Pity these, oh! pity them all.

For they suffer, alas! from ill incurable, and a tear they mingle with every grain of sand that Time lets fall. Their heart, like the orfrey within the ruins' depths, moans within their weakened breasts a hymn to despair.

Their life is like the woods when autumn ends. Every passing wind from their crown doth strip the last touch of green, and their weeping dreams go silent, floating through the clouds like flock of storks when winter draweth nigh.

Their torments never in poets' songs are told. Martyrs of thought, they bear not round their heads

the shining aureole; and on the ways of earth they lonely march, and on the frozen ground they fall as snow doth fall when in the night it comes.

As on I went, my thoughts turning over, sad and speechless, under the icy vault, along the narrow way, stopping suddenly my companion said, as she stretched out her hand so frail: — "Look whither my finger points."

It was a horseman with a waving plume, long curling hair and black moustache, and spurs of gold. He wore a mantle, a rapier, and a ruff, like the ruffling blades in days of Louis Treize, and seemed still young.

But on looking close I saw that his wig, under the false brown hair upon the neck, allowed to show the whitened hair. His brow like face of ruffled sea was wrinkled; his cheek so hollow that all his teeth did show.

In spite of the thick rouge with which it was covered, — as marble is o'erlaid with rosy gauze, — his pallor was plain to see; and through the carmine his lips that coloured, under his forced laugh 't was plain that every night hot fever did him kiss.

His staring eyes seemed eyes of glass; they nothing had of earthly look — nor tear, nor glance. Diamonds they were, set within his gloomy lids, and shone with cold gleam and unchanging brilliancy. An old man in truth he was.

His back was bowed, as bowed as arch of bridge; his feet were sore and swollen by the gout, his weight able scarce to bear; his pale hands trembled as tremble the waves under the North wind's kiss, and let slip the rings too big for his fingers grown.

All this luxury, all this rouge upon the sunken face formed a combination monstrous both and strange, and dark was the sight and uglier yet than coffin in courtesan's home; than skeleton adorned with robe of silk; than old hag in a mirror glancing.

Entrusting to night his amorous plaint he stood below a darkened pane beneath a lonesome balcony. No white brow against the glass did press; no sun of beauty did its face unveil within the open depth of heaven.

"Tell me, what do you there, old man, in the darkness; on a night when the funeral swarms fly forth

from out the tombs? Pageless and without torch, whom seek you so late, so far, at the hour when the Angel of Midnight in the belfry sings and weeps?

"You are no longer at the age when all smiled and welcomed you; when, petal by petal, virgins scattered at your feet the flower of their beauty; it is no longer for you that windows are oped. You are fit for naught but by your ancestors to sleep under the carven marble tomb.

"Hear you not the owl its shrill cry uttering? Hear you not in the woods the great, hungry wolves howl? Oh! foolish old man, return; it is the moment when the moon wakes the pallid vampire upon its golden couch. Return to your home, return!

"The mocking wind your song on its wing away hath borne; none to you is listening, and adown your mantle stream the tears of the gale." — He answers nothing. — "Oh! Death, tell me who this man may be, and know you the name by which he is called?" — "That man is Don Juan."

VII

Don Juan

Oh! happy youths whose heart scarce opes as doth the violet to the first breath of smiling spring; milk-white souls like maybloom sweet, where, in the welcome sunshine and in the silver rain, all warbles and all blows.

Oh! all ye who your mother's arms do leave without knowing life and knowledge bitter and who seek all things to learn, — poets and dreamers, more than once, no doubt, on edge of woods, as your road you took in sunset's splendour;

At that lovely hour when on branches swaying the white doves bill and the bullfinches nest; when weary nature sighs and falls asleep; when, like a lyre when the strain is done, the leaf in the breeze quivers;

When calm and forgetfulness on all things fall; when the sylph returns to its pavilion of rose under the perfumes nestling, — moved by these things and of restless ardour full, you have longed for my lists and my conquests all. You have envied me

The feasts, and the kisses on shoulders nude, all the sensuous pleasures to your age unknown; exquisite torments dear! Zerlina, Elvira, Anna, the jealous Roman girls, England's fair lilies, Andalusians brown, all that lovely flock of mine.

And then the voice of your souls did ask of you: "How did you do to have more women than Sultan ever owned? How did you manage, in spite of bolts and bars, within the bed of lovely maids to sleep? You happy, happy Don Juan!

"You forgetful victor, a single one of those, whose name you put not down, one of your least fair, your most modest flower; oh! how well, how long, we should have adored her. She would have adorned, as within an urn of gold, the altar of our heart.

"She would have scented, that humble violet whose head your foot within the grass did bow, our own pale springtime. We should have picked up, and wet with our tears the blue-eyed star, that in the ball-room had fallen from your inconstant hand.

"Oh! wondrous tremors of the fever of love; doves that from heaven upon the lips alight; kisses so bitter-

sweet; last veils falling; and you, glorious waves of golden hair, flowing over shoulders brown, when shall we know you?"

Ye children! I have known all these pleasures you dream of; round the fatal tree Eve's serpent of eld did not more closely twine. To mortal eyes never did human-headed dragon the fruit of that forbidden tree make shine with greater brilliancy.

For, like nests of finches tame, ready their flight to take, on lips I 've caught nests of timid loves; within my arms phantoms ravishing I 've pressed; many a blooming virgin upon me has outpoured the purest balm of her calyx white.

The truth to find, ye cunning courtesans, I 've pressed under the rouge your lips more worn than stones upon the road. Ye loathsome sewers, to which flow the whole world's streams, within your depths I 've plunged; and thou, Debauch so foul, thy morrows I have known.

I 've seen the purest brows prostrate sink, once the orgy done, amid the outpoured wine upon the cloth red-stained. I have seen the close of balls, and arms per-

spiring, and pallid faces more wan than death under their rumpled hair when rose the sun.

Like the miner who works an oreless vein, by day, by night the depths of life I 've searched, and never struck the lead. I 've asked of love the life it gives, but all in vain; and ne'er on earth have I affection felt for one who bore a name.

Many a heart I 've burned, and on its ashes trod; but like the salamander, cold amid the flames I did remain. I had mine own ideal — fresh as dew, a vision golden, an opal, by God's own glance iridescent made;

A woman, such as sculptor never wrought; herself a Cleopatra and a Mary too, in modesty, grace, and beauty all; a mystic rose, wherein no worm did lurk; a burning volcano to stainless purity of snow allied!

At the fateful parting of the ways, Pythagoras' Y, the left road 't was I took; and though onward I travel, yet the bourne I never reach. Deceitful Sensuality! 't was thou I followed, and it may be that the riddle of life could be solved, O Virtue, by thee alone!

Why did I not, like Faust, within my cell so dark, gaze on the wall at trembling shadow of microcosm golden? Why did I not, books of old and magic works reading, by my furnace pass the darkness' hours in seeking pleasure?

Strong was my mind: I could have read thy book and drunk thy bitter wine, O Science, without being intoxicate, as young student well may. I should have forced Isis her veil to remove, and from heaven's heights brought down the stars within my sombre room.

Listen not to Love, an evil teacher he. To love is not to know; to live is to know. So learn, and learn still more. Cast and cast again the lead, and plunge yet deeper down within the depths profound than did your elders e'er.

Let Leviathan through its nostrils blow; let the weight of the seas within your breasts your lungs sharp pierce. Hunt through the black reefs that no man yet has known, and in its casket golden the ring of Solomon perchance you 'll find.

VIII

Thus spake Don Juan, and under the icy arch, wearied, but resolved the end to reach, I took my way again. At last I entered on a gloomy plain which a fiery sky on the boundless horizon closed with circle of carmine.

The soil of the plain was ivory white, and cut by a river like a silken band of richest red. It was level all; nor wood, nor church, nor tower; and the weary wind swept it with its wings and uttered plaintive moans.

A first I thought the tint so strange, the blood-red hue with which the stream thus flushed was but some reflection faint; that chalk and tufa formed that ivory white. But as I bent to drink, I saw it was real blood indeed that flowed.

I saw that with whitened bones the earth was covered o'er, a chill snow-fall of death, where no green plant, no flower, did grow; that the soil was made of the dust of men, and that people enough Thebes, Palmyra, and Rome to fill were sleeping there.

A shadow with bowed back, bent brow, passed with the wind. He it was unmistakably, with coat of gray and little hat. An eagle golden over his head did soar, seeking, thereon to rest, anxious, bewildered, the standard's staff.

The skeletons sought to put on their heads; the spectral drummer its sticks rattled in time with His sovereign step; a clamour vast rose as he passed, and cannons countless roared in the storm their triumphal brazen blast.

He seemed not the tumult to hear, and like a marble god, of its worship careless, walked on in silence sunk. Sometimes only, as if by stealth, his eyes looked up and sought in heaven his star now fallen.

But the heavens, purple with the conflagration's light, showed never a star, and the growing flames kept rising and rising higher. — Then, paler still than when in the St. Helena of old, his arms upon his breast he crossed, full of muttered moans.

When he came before us, "Mighty Emperor," said I, "the mysterious word which fate compels me here below to seek; the last word which Faust of his

books did ask, as Don Juan of love, the word of Death or Life, can it be you know?"

—"Oh! wretched child," said the imperial shade, "return above. Icy cold is the wind and chilled through am I. Along this road no hostelry you will find where you may warm your feet, for Death alone receives those who this way pass.

"Look, 't is all over. The star eclipsed is. Black blood falls in showers from my eagle's side, wounded in its flight, and with the white flecks of the eternal snow from the depths of the sombre skies the feathers of its wings downward flutter to the ground.

"Alas! your desire I can never satisfy. In vain the word of Life have I sought, like Faust and Don Juan. I know no more than on the day of my birth, and yet, in the heyday of my power, it was I that made the calm and storm.

"Everywhere I was called above all men, THE MAN. Before me the eagle and the fasces were borne as before the old Roman Cæsars; there were ten kings that bore my train; I was a Charlemagne within a single hand the globe embracing.

"No more have I seen from the top of that column where my glory, a tri-coloured rainbow, gleams than you can see from below. In vain with my heel I spurred on the world; ever rose the sound of camps and the roar of the guns, of the stress of battle and storm.

"Ever came on salvers the keys of the towns, ever a concert of bugles and servile cheers, of laurels and speeches; a black sky, with rain of shot, dead men to salute upon the battlefield, — thus were spent my days.

"How bitterly did your sweet honey name, oh! my mother, Laetitia, belie my fortune woeful! How wretched I! Everywhere I bore my wandering pain; I had dreamed of Empire, and the globe of earth did hollow sound within my palm.

"Oh! for the lot of a shepherd, and the beech under which Tityrus during the heat of the day withdraws and sings of Amaryllis. Oh! for the twinkling bell and the bleating flock, the pure milk flowing from the udder white between the fingers fair.

"Oh! for the scent of the new-mown hay and the smell of the stable; for the brown bread of the herd and for nuts on the table, and a platter of wood! For a seven-hole flute put together with wax, and of goats half a dozen — that the sum of my desire; I who have been the conqueror of kings.

"A sheepskin my shoulders shall cover; Galatea laughing shall flee to the reeds and I pursue her. Sweeter than ambrosia shall be my verse, and Daphnis shall with jealousy pale at the sound of the airs I shall play.

"Oh! I long to go to my Corsican home; through the wood where the goats, as they roam, the bark of trees nibble; down the gullies deep, along the hollow way where cicada shrilly sings, careless in its wandering, my ranging flock following.

"Pitiless the Sphinx to whomsoever fails. Imprudent youth, do you mean that it shall slay you and drink the purest blood of your heart? The only one the fatal riddle who guessed slew his father Laïus, and incest committed. Such the victor's sad reward!"

IX

Now I have returned from that sombre voyage, where through the darkness for torch and for star one has but the eyes of the owl; and, as after a day's ploughing the buffalo returns with slow steps and worn, and head bowed down, I go with shoulders bowed.

From the land of phantoms I have returned, but still to wear, far from the speechless realms, the pallid hue of death. My vestments, like the funeral crape cast upon an urn, hang limp adown my frame unto the ground.

I have escaped from the hands of a Death greedier far than that by Lazarus' tomb which watched, for what it takes it keeps: with the body parts, but the soul retains; the torch returns, but the flame puts out; and Christ Himself would powerless prove.

I am no more, alas! but the shadow of myself; the living tomb wherein lies all I love; and alone, for I survive myself. I bear about with me the ice-cold remains of my illusions — lovely dead for whom I make a shroud.

I am yet too young; I must love and live, O Death! I cannot yet resolve to follow thee adown the darksome way. I have not had time to build the column on which Glory my crown to-morrow morn shall hang. O Death, do thou later return!

Oh! white-breasted virgin, thy poet spare! Remember, I the first did thee make more beautiful than day. Thy greenish hue, to diaphanous pallor have I changed; under glorious dark hair thine old skull concealed; and thee have I courted.

Oh! let me live a while and thy praise I 'll sing: thy palaces to adorn, angels I shall carve and crosses forge. Within the church and within the graveyard the marble I 'll make weep, and the stones shall moan as upon a regal monument.

I shall devote to thee my loveliest songs; ever for thee bouquets of immortelles and scentless flowers I 'll have. My garden, O Death, with thine own trees is planted, — the yew, the box, the cypress, over the marbles twine their green-brown boughs.

I tell the handsome flowers, sweet glories of the beds, the lily majestic its white cup opening, the tulip golden,

the rose of May the nightingale doth love, I tell the chrysanthemum, too, and many another still, —

Grow ye not here; another soil now seek, ye fresh springtime loves; for this garden austere your brilliancy is too great. The holly's painted leaves would wound you and in the air the hemlock's poison you 'd imbibe, and bitter scent of yew.

Forsake me not, O Mother, O Nature! A time of youth thou owest to every creature; a season of love to every soul. I still am young and yet feel the chill of age; I cannot love. Let me have my youth if but for a single day.

Be no stepmother to me, O Nature beloved. Let some sap return to the faded plant that hates to die. The torrent from mine eyes with its tears has drowned its worm-eaten bud which sunshine does not dry and which fails to bloom.

O virgin air, O crystal air, O water, principle of this world! Earth, that feedest all! and thou, fertile flame, a beam from God's own eye! let not die yet, ye who life bestow, the poor drooping flower that seeks no more than for a brief time to blow.

Stars that from above behold the whirling worlds, rain down on me from your lashes golden your diamond tears! Moon, lily of the night, flower of the garden divine, pour thy rays upon me, O fair solitary, from the uttermost depths of heaven!

Eye ever open in the centre of space, do thou pierce, O mighty Sun, the passing cloud, and that I may see thee once more let the eagles through the heavens that swoop on mighty wing, the griffins that fiery fly, the swallows swift, to me their wings now lend!

Ye Winds! that from the flowers their soul's perfume steal and avowals of love from lips beloved; pure Air of the Mountains, still full of the scent of the balsam; Breeze of the Ocean which one breathes so free, my lungs now fill!

April has made for me a grassy carpet whereon to lie; above my brow the lilac blooms in clusters great, for now is springtime come. Take me within your arms, sweet poet's dreams; between your polished breasts my poor head rest, and cradle me long.

Be far from me, nightmares, spectres of the nights! Roses, women, songs, — all things fair and loves glori-

ous, — these are what I want. Hail! O Antiquity's Muse, Muse with the fresh green bays and tunic white, that younger art every day!

Brown with lotus eyes; fair with eyelash black, O Grecian girl of Miletus, upon the ivory stool place thy fair bare feet, and with golden nectar let the cup be filled. To thy beauty first I drink, Theone white, and then to the gods unknown.

More lascivious and yielding than the wave, thy bosom is! Milk is not whiter, nor apple rounder. Come, one sweet kiss! Make haste, make haste, for our life, O Theone, is a winged steed by Time spurred on. Let us hasten our life to use.

Shout, Io, Pæan! . . . But who is this woman under her veil so pale? Why, 't is thou, infamous hag! I can see thy skull so bare, thy great orbless sockets, loathsome prostitute! eternal courtesan! clasping the world with thine arms so lean.

RETURN
TO → COLLEGE LIBRARY, UCLA

LOAN PERIOD 1 2 3

4

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

QL APR 15 1996

FEB 16 199

UCLA-College Library
PQ 2258 E53E 1903
005 693 201 5

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 001 147 304 8